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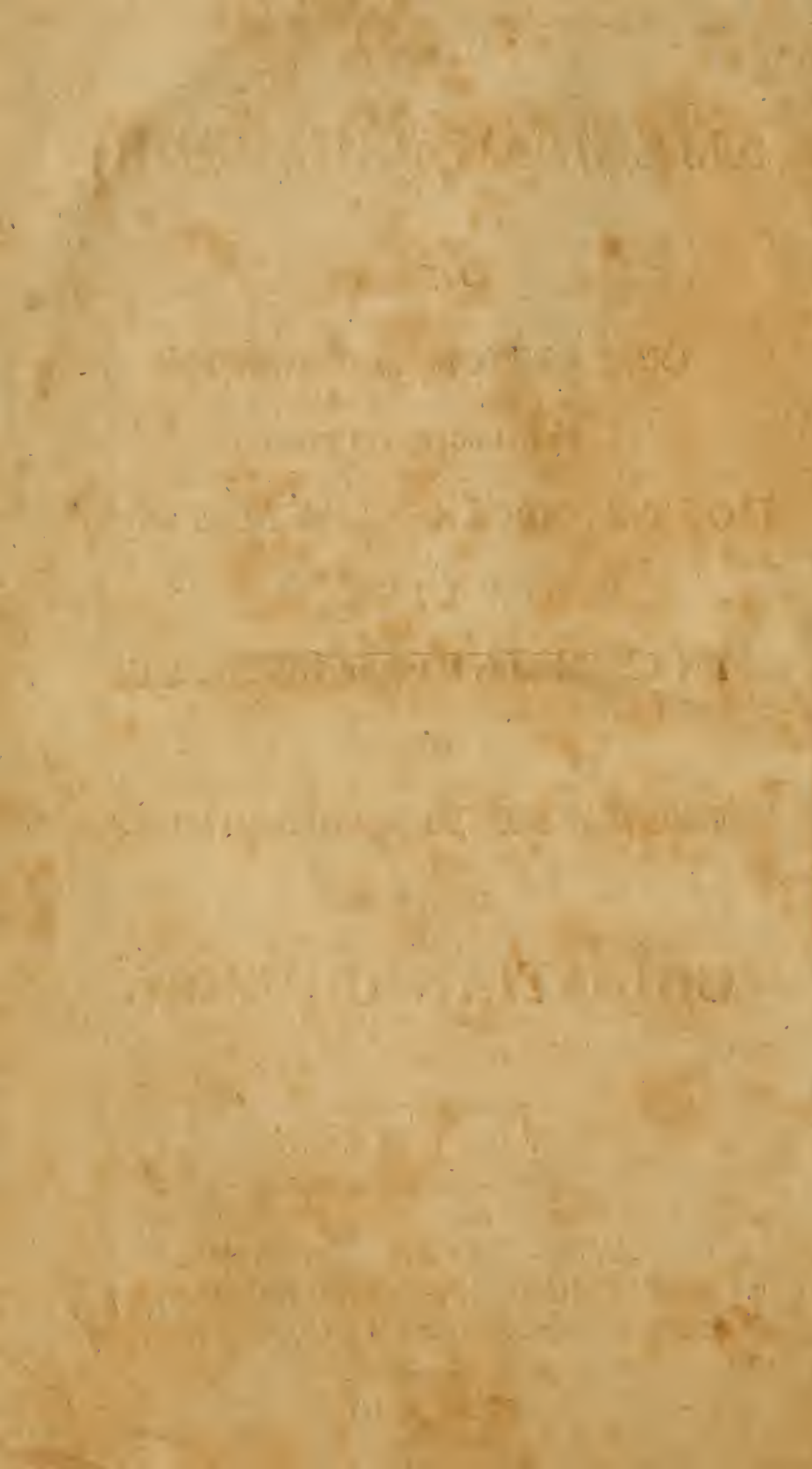


THE
AMERICAN PREACHER;
OR A
COLLECTION OF SERMONS
FROM SOME OF THE
MOST EMINENT PREACHERS,
NOW LIVING
IN THE UNITED STATES,
OF
DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS
IN THE
CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

VOLUME IV.

NEW-HAVEN: PRINTED
BY ABEL MORSE, FOR THE EDITORS, WHO
HOLD THE PRIVILEGE OF COPY-RIGHT.

M,DCC,XCIII.



P R E F A C E of VOL. I.

TO THOSE who have seen the plan and circular letter sent abroad for the execution of this work, little information will be necessary; but for the information of those who have not seen them, it may not be improper, or out of place, to say--that the following were the objects in view, and those which were published as the foundation and intention of the work.

“I. To bring into public view many excellent discourses now in manuscript, promising great benefit to the interests of religion..

“II. To unite in one work some of the best performances of the day, as a specimen of the pulpit talents of the time.

“III. By uniting the several most important religious denominations in one work, to open the door for the more extensive exercise of CHRISTIAN CHARITY among CHRISTIAN BRETHREN.

“IV. To afford Christian families a compendium of Christian instruction.

“V. To prevent the farther importation of printed sermons, by encouraging the publications of our own country.”

SUCH were the real, and, we trust, justifiable reasons, by which the public were invited to encourage the plan.

BESIDE the influence the plan itself might be supposed to claim, it was supported by the following recommendation.

“HAVING duly considered the plan of the AMERICAN PREACHER, now offered for the approbation of the public, we take the liberty of signifying our concurrence in the same; not doubting but it may well execute the objects it proposes.

WILLIAM LIVINGSTON, *Govenor of the State of New-Jersey.*

GEORGE CLINTON, *Governor of the State of New-York.*

WILLIAM SAMUEL JOHNSON, *President of Columbia College, and one of the Senators of the United States.*

ELIAS BOUDINOT, *L. L. D. Member of Congress.”*

THE success of the plan and circular letter is sufficiently testified by the existence of the work in its present form, as well as by the respectable list of subscribers who have supported it.

IT is not pretended that all the preachers of the gospel in the United States, who are justly entitled to distinction, both for the purity

of their doctrines and elegance in style, are among the number of those who have supported this work : but we believe, that those who appear in the following pages, will be pronounced to have well supported the cause they were so indulgent as to undertake.

SUCH has been the reception of our plan in the present instance, that we feel ourselves justified in announcing to the public, a FOURTH VOLUME ; and in a word, a SUCCESSION of volumes, so long as the present disposition to encourage the work shall continue.

IN support of this plan, we plead an inclination more fully to execute the objects just now recited, as giving origin to the work ; and we add a desire,

I. To form such a collection of discourses, as may amount to a system of Christian faith and practice.

II. By this system to raise an opposition to error and heresy of every kind.

III. To direct the present prevailing disposition to liberality in matters of religion, into a proper channel ; and open the door for Christian communion upon principles ACKNOWLEDGED and UNDERSTOOD.

IV. To lay a foundation for the universal a-

greement of the Christian church, when the high prospects of futurity shall be unfolded.

WE pretend not to a spirit of prophecy ; but find a willingness to hazard a conjecture, that, under the supreme and superintending providence of God, some such small beginnings or dawnings of light may, eventually, be considered as announcing the approach of MERIDIAN DAY.

WE are not backward to say, that such religious union and influence as this work labors to accomplish, will add no small DIGNITY and SUPPORT to the POLITICAL INTERESTS of our country. To the influence of law, it will add the energy of conscience and moral duty ; to the subject, it will administer safety and protection from the encroachments of arbitrary power ; and to all under its influence, will shed the richest of CIVIL and SOCIAL blessings.*

* “ A transient view of those states and kingdoms, which have made the most striking figure in the history of the world, and which have been most renowned for the felicity of their government, will convince us, that religion was by them always considered as a matter of great importance to CIVIL SOCIETY.

“ The greatest politicians and most celebrated legislators of antiquity depended much on this, to give sanction to their laws, and make them operate with vigour and facility.”

REESE : *On the influence of religion in civil society.*

“ Our holy religion, by regulating and composing the passions, enlightening and exalting the mind, and purifying and meliorating the heart, conduces, in a high

WITH the deepest veneration, we DEDICATE our labors, and those of our brethren, to the GOOD PROVIDENCE of ALMIGHTY GOD, and to the PATRONAGE of the PIOUS of every denomination, into whose hands this work may come ; trusting that those who favor it, will, in the perusal, find their attention amply rewarded ; and, in the end, enjoy the high prospects it permits them to entertain.

WE return our grateful acknowledgments to those REVEREND GENTLEMEN who have contributed to the execution of this work thus far--not doubting, that the contemplation of

“degree, to the peace and well being of social life : It
 “makes good men—from thence the transition is easy
 “and natural to regular citizens and obedient subjects.
 “Where private virtue cannot be found, it is in vain to
 “look for public : and laws are of little efficacy without
 “good example.”

Governor PATTERSON'S *answer to the congratulatory address of the Presbytery of New-Brunswick.*

“Another important consequence of this discovery, is,
 “an enlarged liberality of sentiment among men. The
 “liberality to which I refer, is discernible in the spirit
 “of religious toleration, which spreads like a flood over
 “the face of the earth. This toleration, when it be-
 “comes universal, cannot but accomplish matters of the
 “highest importance to the world. Truth and reason
 “will then burst with irresistible energy from the dark
 “clouds of superstition and bigotry—dispel the mist of
 “error and absurdity, and bring the GREAT FAMILY OF
 “THE WORLD to an uniformity of religious belief and
 worship.”

ALFRED : *On the progress of true principles of freedom, and good government.*

having added something to the support of the great truths of the gospel--of having administered instruction to the ignorant, warning to the impious, and edification to the saints--but above all, the contemplation of having laid a foundation for the progress, unity and perfection of the kingdom of the Redeemer, will afford higher reward for their services, than it is in our power to give.

In behalf of the interests of this work,
subscribe,

to the cause of truth, a friend,

and to the public,

a devoted servant--

DAVID AUSTIN.

Elizabeth Town,
Jan. 1, 1791.

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S E R M O N L X I.

THE NATURE OF SAVING FAITH.

B Y

ROBERT SMITH, D. D.

*Pastor of a Presbyterian Congregation, Pequea,
Pennsylvania*

II. *Pet. i. 1.*

--*To them that have obtained like precious faith
with us.*

IN the sacred oracles five objects, especially, are called PRECIOUS. The HOLY-GHOST faith, *the REDEMPTION of the soul is precious* (a) The BLOOD of CHRIST, the price of our redemption, is *precious blood* (b) CHRIST, the glorious RANSOMER, is PRECIOUS to his ransomed people (c) The PROMISES of the gospel, in which he is exhibited to

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(a *Psa. xlviii. 3.*) (b *1 Pet. i. 9.*) (c *1 Pet. ii. 7.*)

us, are *great and precious promises* (*d*) And, in our text, FAITH, which taketh hold of the promise of life in Christ Jesus, is called *precious faith*.

That is accounted precious which is of an excellent quality, especially, if it be rare.-- Gold is preferred to brass, moral virtue to gold; but the faith of God's elect (which is the theme of our text) infinitely surpasseth these, and every acquisition below the sun. It is a rare jewel indeed; for *who hath believed our report? to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* (*e*) And, in its operations and effects, it is most excellent, as, we doubt not, will appear in the sequel of these discourses.

What tends farther to raise the value of saving faith in our esteem, is, (1) the manner in which we are made partakers of it, namely by the gracious and sovereign disposal of heaven. λαχουσι, which our translation renders obtained, signifies to get or obtain a thing by lot. But the ordering of a lot is the sole prerogative of Jehovah, who giveth the prize to whomsoever he will. So *faith is not of ourselves: it is the gift of God.* (*f*) The peculiar donation of heaven. (2) That the weakest real believers share the blessing together with the strongest Apostles themselves, greatly magnifieth

(*d* II Pet. i. 4.) (*e* Isa. liii. 1.) (*f* Eph. ii. 8.)

our idea of it's worth--To them that have obtained *like* precious faith with *us*. The faith of believers in common may not be equal to that of Apostles in degree; yet, as well in it's origin, objects, causes and effects, as in the nature of it's operations, it is the very same with theirs. It is the glory of christianity, that God revealeth the mysteries of the kingdom to babes and sucklings, while they are *hid from the wise and prudent*; (g) and distributes to the weakest babe in Christ a share with Prophets and Apostles in the communion of grace.--*That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* (h)

Doct. Saving faith is a most excellent donation of heaven to all who become partakers of it. In treating this subject, I shall,

- I. Explain the nature of saving faith.
 - II. Illustrate the excellency of it.
 - III. Apply the whole in some practical uses.
- I. I am to explain the nature of saving faith.

The proper idea of faith, is a credit given to

(g Matt. xi. 25.) (h I John i. 3.)

testimony, grounded upon the veracity of the witness ; which supposeth as well a trust in the person speaking, as a belief of his word. In this, faith differeth from every other species of evidence. Agreeably to this general idea of it, we observe, that saving faith consists in the *credit* the heart yieldeth to the testimony of Christ, and its *trust* in him for salvation. Some good divines have observed, that, “where-
 “ever saving faith is mentioned in the new
 “testament, it generally, if not always, signi-
 “fies trust in a person, as well as the belief of
 “a doctrine.”

FIRST, saving faith consists in the credit the heart yieldeth to the testimony of Jesus, “THE AMEN, THE FAITHFUL AND TRUE WITNESS.” This is sometimes called the mind’s persuasion of, sometimes its assent to, the truth of divine testimony. This testimony we have delivered to us in the law and the gospel, each of which is necessary to be believed in order to salvation. By these the spirit of Christ revealeth to our hearts the glory and will of God, which are the general objects of faith. By the gospel, particularly, Christ is revealed to us in his mediatorial characters, or, the glory of God shining in his face, i. e. in his person and mediation, which is the peculiar and direct object of saving faith ;--more especially Christ as a priest, is the immediate ob-

ject of faith, as justifying. Faith in it's general as well as its more specific nature, will necessarily come into the description to be given of it, notwithstanding, we have it chiefly in view, to give as brief a description of it's operations and effects, with the practical improvement, as may be consistent with perspicuity and profit.

In saving faith the heart yields it's assent to the divine law as holy, just, and good. By this glass the Holy Spirit reflects, as it were, rays of the majesty, purity, and justice of God, upon the sinner's conscience. In the light thereof he reads the righteous claims of Jehovah upon him ;--the strictness of the demands of the law ; the depravity of his nature and practice, with his utter inability to raise himself from the ruins of his fallen state. He tries to pay the law it's due ; but in vain. He finds his heart averse to the duties it requires, and prone to the evils it forbids.--Then he tries to soften and cleanse his hard and polluted heart, that he may offer to God a more acceptable service ; but in vain. The stone within him will neither break, nor melt ; and the more he endeavours to wash himself, the deeper his stain appears.--No way of relief now appears for him, but Christ. Not daring, however, to venture to apply to the Saviour, in all his guilt and pollution, he tries to prepare him-

self for Christ, by working some good dispositions in his heart. This he also finds to be vain. For could one penitent sigh, one holy desire, one melting impression of love save him, he cannot command it. Now he is shut up to the necessity of coming as a totally ruined and helpless sinner; therefore at the call of the gospel, guilty and unworthy as he is, he attempts to take hold of Christ. But, alas! The hand is withered, he has no power to stretch it out.--He can as soon tear strong mountains from their roots, or create a world, as root out his unbelief, and create faith in his dead and barren heart. Hence, at last, falling at the feet of his Judge and his Saviour, he cries, *Lord, be merciful to me a sinner!* A poor, worthless, helpless, undone sinner! This is true conviction of sin, or a faith of the law wrought in the heart by the spirit and word of God.

That such a faith of the law is necessary to a true faith of the gospel, or in other words, that a conviction of sin is necessary to induce us to flee to Christ for salvation, is evident from many express testimonies of scripture.--*For by the law is the knowledge of sin. (i) I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (k) I through the law am dead to the law, that I*

(i Rom. iii. 20.) (k Rom. vii. 9.)

might live unto God. (1) The operations of faith with the images by which they are illustrated, clearly evince the truth of this doctrine. It is described by flying to Christ for refuge, which supposes a sense of danger. It receiveth him in all his offices, which supposes a sense of the need of him in all his mediatorial characters. The same truth also shines with irresistible evidence from the great designs of redemption by Christ, which were to stain the pride of man, and magnify free grace ;--to humble the sinner, and exalt the saviour. That mercy might have a triumph in the saved sinner's bosom. he is stung with a sense of his sin and guilt, and made to glory only in the Lord.

One thing here merits your special notice, namely, "although they that are regenerate
 "and believe in Christ, be delivered from the
 "moral law as a covenant of works, so as there-
 "by they are neither justified nor condemn-
 "ed; yet it is of general use, common to
 "them with all men, to inform them of the
 "holy nature and will of God, and of their
 "duty, binding them to walk accordingly, to
 "convince them of their disability to keep it;
 "and of the sinful pollution of their nature,
 "hearts, and lives, and thereby help them to
 "a clearer sight of the need they have of

(1 *Gal. ii. 19.*)

“Christ, and of the perfection of his obedience.”(*m*)

The law is of perpetual use to believers, not only as a rule of life, but to keep awake in their hearts a sense of their need of Christ, in every respect, and for every thing. They cannot indeed be convinced that they are in a state of condemnation, though they may greatly fear it; (for the spirit of God is not the author of contradictions) but they shall be taught, more and more, the sinfulness of their nature, with the absolute necessity of the blood and grace of Christ, to purge the guilt and stain of their corruptions; and the more they become acquainted with God and their own hearts, the more fully will they be convinced of this, and the more deeply abased under a sense of their own unworthiness. The most holy men are ever the most humble, have the deepest sense of the depravity of their nature, and make the fullest confession of their sin and guilt. This is most evident in the case of Job, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Paul. (*n*) Believing views of God humble them in the dust, pour the filth of their corruption before their eyes, make them reject all their own righteousness as filthy rags,

(*m* *W. M. C. Chat. quest's.* 95. & 97.) : *Job.* xl. 4. & xlii. 5, 6. *Psa.* cxxx. 3 *Isa.* vi. & 64. 6. *Jer.* xvii. 9. *Phi.* iii. 8. *Rom.* vii. 18; 24.)

and groan for deliverance from the remains of sin, as a most offensive body of death. *

But what more especially claims your notice, is the credit which, in believing, the heart yields to the testimony of the gospel; the substance of which is glad tidings of salvation through Christ, to whomsoever of our fallen race shall believe in his name.--The believing soul accepts it as *a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, (o) the chief of sinners ! And God so loved the world, that he gave his only*

* By these, with many other instances which might be adduced from the word of God, *their fallacy plainly appears, who assert the perfection of grace in this life, and tell us they live without sin. If we say we have no sin, (saith the apostle) we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. I John. i. 8.* Such professors deceive themselves indeed, and plainly manifest their ignorance of God and his law, of their own hearts, of the nature of sin, and what it is that constitutes a perfection in grace. To evade the force of the argument against them, from Paul's complaint of the body of death, Rom. vii. 24. some of them tell us, *the apostle spake this of himself in a state of unregeneracy, or in a state merely of conviction.* Had they any just discernment, or were they disposed to learn, they might be easily convinced of their error from the context. We hear Paul declaring in the 22d verse, *I delight in the law of God after the inward man.* Is this the temper of an unregenerate man? or of one in a mere state of

(o I Tim. i. 15.)

begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. (p) Whosoever believeth, even the guiltiest of the guilty, and the vilest of the vile ! For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fullness dwell, that of his fulness we might receive, and grace for grace. (q) This gracious publication invites your attention to the power, mercy, and faithfulness of Christ, the precious objects as well as grounds of evangelical faith ; to which we shall add, the light or evidence by which these glorious objects are discerned.

1. In believing the soul is persuaded of the power of Christ to save it, guilty and wretched as it is ; for God hath *laid help upon one that is mighty to save ; (r) One who is able to save them to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. (s)*

conviction ? The law of sin in his members, the body of sin and death, the thorn in his flesh, even after he had been in the third heaven, all unite to give Paul the most full conviction of his imperfection. He was no perfectionist in principle, though a strong one in desire. Not, says he, *as though I had already attained, either were already perfect—But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Phil. iii. 13, 14.*

(p John iii. 16.) (q Col i. 19. John i. 16.) (r Psa. lxxxix. 19. Isa. lxiii. 1.) (s Heb. vii. 25.)

Fears are apt to rise in the heart of a convinced sinner, that Christ cannot, consistently with his glory, pardon him; because he has so often closed his heart and ears against the most alluring motives and pressing calls to turn and live. But no sooner is he enlightened in the all-sufficient fullness of Emmanuel, than he perceives an infinite virtue in his blood and grace to purge out guilt of the highest aggravations, and sins of the deepest dye. Now he fully believes that the righteousness and atoning blood of the Saviour have completely answered the demands of a broken law,--satisfied the claims of justice, quenched the flame of incensed wrath, glorified God in the highest, and procured heaven for the most heinous offenders, with all the influences of grace to prepare them for it. Therefore in Christ he finds a remedy for all his maladies, and a rich supply for all his wants--Pardon for his guilt; cleansing for his pollution; liberty for his bondage; cloathing for his nakedness; sight for his blindness; strength for his weakness; riches for his poverty; comfort for his sorrow; the bread of life for his hunger; and the water of life, for his thirsty soul.--And all this for the praise of infinitely rich grace! How do these views of a Saviour raise his sinking soul, and become to it as life from the dead!

2. In saving faith the soul gives full credit to this great gospel truth, that the *mercy* of Christ is equal to his power to save. Never will a convinced sinner take sanctuary under the cross, until he believes that Christ is as willing as able to save him, and God is well pleased for his righteousness' sake. It is a property of nature to rise against, and be averse from, an enemy viewed as irreconcilable. But no sooner does an inclination to kindness and reconciliation appear in him, than it melts the heart and begets confidence. This is evident in the sinner's case. The more hopeless he is, the more hardened his heart grows.--The deeper his convictions, the more lively his corruptions; at least, he perceives them more sensibly. *When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. (t)*

So great a sense of guilt seizeth the trembling conscience of the convinced sinner, that he fears if God could, consistently with his honour, forgive him; yet he will not; because his sins have been committed against so much light, so many mercies, warnings, calls to repentance, stirrings of the Spirit, reproofs of conscience, and resolutions to amend. Such a sink of every abomination does his heart appear, and so odious his crimes,

(t *Rom. vii. 9.*)

that he thinks hell itself can scarcely exceed his baseness. It is easier for him to believe that any sinner upon earth may be saved, than himself. What increaseth his fears, is, that instead of an humble and penitent frame under his convictions, as he hoped and strove for, his insensibility, his enmity, and other plagues of his heart gather strength. In this condition, some have found their hearts rising against the heavens. Some have sunk down into the very borders of despair; and it is common for convinced sinners to fly from the presence of infinite holiness, as fugitive Adam, when he ran to hide himself from the face of his maker among the trees of the garden. But no sooner does the distressed sinner really believe in his heart, that *God's tender mercies are over all his works, (u) and mercy rejoiceth against judgment; (v)* no sooner does he believe this, than the chains of his captivity drop off, unbelief, the head of his body of death, dies, and all his other corruptions, which received strength and nourishment therefrom, weaken and die with it--his heart of stone is melted, his enmity broken, and his soul is reconciled to the cross and sceptre of Christ.*

* If these observations be true, and both scripture

(u *Psa.* cxlv. 9.) (v *Jam.* ii 13.)

The Holy Spirit gives to believers those spiritual views of mercy and grace in the Saviour, by revealing to their hearts the excellency of his adorable characters;--the gracious designs of redemption;--the love of the father in sending his Son, and the love of the Son in coming to die for sinners;--the riches and freedom of gospel promises and overtures;--or by impressing them with his earnest and tender entreaties and exhortations with them to hear and live. By all, or by any of these, or by whatsoever word of the gospel he pleaseth, Christ reveals to inquiring souls his tender mercy and grace to save the worst of sinners, and draws them into a cordial union with himself.

I have been the more particular here, because some honest christians perplex themselves, and question their own sincerity, if

and experience evince the truth of them, how absurd then *their* notion, who assert, that the flames of hell will produce penitence in the hearts of the damned, upon which God will discharge them from their prison. Were this doctrine true, hell would long since have been cleared of it's inhabitants. A similar error are *they* guilty of, who tell us, that if God makes use of means at all in the change of a soul, it is the law exclusive of the gospel. This plainly manifests their ignorance of the holy scriptures, of the nature of sin, of the human heart, and the manner of divine operations upon it.

they may not have obtained their first relief in the same manner others have obtained their's, and from the very same words. The questions are not, in what manner, or by what word of the gospel have you been delivered from the spirit of bondage? Whether by a particular promise applied to your hearts, or by a spiritual description or view of gospel truths, in general, powerfully impressed on them? But the questions are, what has been the nature of your views of divine objects, and what their effects upon your souls?

3. In believing the heart fully confides in the faithfulness of Christ to perform his promise of eternal life to all those who believe on him. The truth of the promise, founded upon the faithfulness of the promiser, is a glorious object of credit. Truth and mercy are ever celebrated in the songs of believers, and inseparably united as grounds of their trust.--
I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said mercy shall be built up forever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens. (w) The promises originated in mercy, and shall be fulfilled in faithfulness. *What eternal love hath spoken, eternal truth will bind.* And O! what relief to the convin-

(w *Psa.* lxxxix i. 2.)

ced sinner to behold rich mercy united with invariable truth inviting him to fly into the arms of a powerful Saviour !

The solicitous inquirer for salvation seeks the firmest grounds to go upon in believing. Here he finds it--The word of him who cannot lie ! The whole gospel may, in a general sense, be viewed as one large promise given as our warrant to believe. All it's invitations, offers, calls, and every motive offered to persuade us to lay hold of eternal life, not only make a tender of mercy, but imply a promise to those who shall accept the offer. But more specifically and directly, the express promises, or those parts of scripture delivered in a promissory form, sanctioned by the oath of God, and enforced with his command to believe, afford us the strongest warrant to appropriate Christ and the whole of his salvation to our own souls.

His promises I say, as well the more general and absolute promises of grace, as the more special and characteristic. Convinced sinners often find great relief and clear directions from the more general, or absolute promises; such as the pardon of sin for God's OWN NAME'S sake, (x) of cleansing from all our *filthiness*, of giving a *new heart*, and tak-

ing away the stoney heart. (y) For although they may not plead an interest in the blessings contained in them as their own actual right, because they have never embraced the offer; yet as these promises manifest Jehovah's willingness to bestow mercies, and contain a free and generous offer of them, they afford the strongest encouragement to apply, and the firmest ground to plead for, the promised favours. Persuaded of this, the distressed sinner ariseth from his sinking discouragements, and ventures to approach a gracious and sin-pardoning Saviour, pleading his own word, Lord, *do as thou hast said*. Here is the very heart, the hard and filthy heart! Melt it with thy love, and cleanse it with thy grace! According to thy word, *pardon mine iniquity; for it is great*. (z) Let a trembling sinner live, O Lord, and I will forever praise thee. Let rich grace forever shine in the salvation of a wretch so unworthy, and so hell deserving!

The special and characteristic promises afford the afflicted soul the most pointed and peculiar encouragements to apply to Christ for relief--Such as these: *come unto me all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest* (a)

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(y Ezek. xxxvi. 25. 26.) (z Psa. xxv. 11.) (a Math. xi. 28.)

Him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out. (b) For they not only hold up the rich grace of God to weary and heavy laden sinners, and invite them to Christ for it; but they give them the strongest security that they shall be accepted, and find rest, upon their coming. From any, or from all these, Christ persuadeth distressed souls of his faithfulness to preform his word, and excites their trust in him for salvation.

4. For the farther illustration of this subject, I shall briefly take notice of the light or evidence by which true believers discern, and yield their assent to, the truths of the gospel. Now this is wholly supernatural.--*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (c)* That power only which produced natural light, and no exertion of natural abilities in the subject of it, nor mere moral suasion, can produce this spiritual light in the soul. The gospel is a glass by which the Holy Spirit reflects the divine glories upon our hearts, as they shine in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ; therefore it is our duty to pay a careful attention to every instruction of it; for by motives divine power operateth upon our souls as moral agents. But every

(b *John. vi. 37.*) (c *11 Cor. iv. 6.*)

motive and every mean will prove ineffectual, until that energy which at first caused light to shine out of darkness, rends the vail from our darkened hearts, and reveals Christ in them. Their opinion is wholly unfounded, who suppose there is no difference between the assent of real and that of mere nominal believers, and that resting in Christ is the only essential act of faith. The full credit given by the heart to the testimony of the Spirit in his word is peculiar to saving faith; there is therefore an essential difference between this and the assent of mere common professors. This difference chiefly consists in three things.

I. The transcendent glories of faith's object are truly discerned by the one; the other has only some dark ineffectual notices of them. The difference is as real and as great, as that of seeing an object and hearing of it only. I may hear of something at a distance, which I never saw, and may not doubt the truth of the account given of it; but if I see the thing itself, my perceptions of it will be quite changed. So by a general faith of the gospel, I may accept the report of it as true, without being sensible of any doubt as to the reality of it; yet never perceive the nature nor the transcendent glories of the objects it exhibits. In saving faith there is a just discernment of the nature and superior beauties of the

object itself. To the true believer Christ appears as the *pearl of great price* (d) indeed, for which he is willing to part with every thing below the Sun. But to the believer in name only, he is as *a root out of dry ground, that has no form nor comeliness, no beauty that we should desire him.* (e) (2.) The objects of faith are most agreeable to the faculties and condition of true believers. In them they perceive every thing for their entertainment and profit--A gracious scheme in which God is glorified in the highest, and sinners saved to the uttermost--Promises originating in mercy, and fulfilled in truth--An all-sufficient and gracious Saviour, in whom there is every thing suited to his desires and deplorable circumstances. These are objects of his delightful contemplation, upon which his faith feeds as hidden manna. But graceless professors have relishes of a very different nature; for they only *mind* (favour) *the things of the flesh.* (e) (3.) They differ widely in the effects they have upon the minds of their respective subjects. The impressions the objects of faith make upon the mind of temporary believers, are *as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away,* (f) leaving their hearts still unchanged, cold, dead, blind, carnal and unbelieving. But sincere believers,

(d *Math. xiii. 46.*) (e *Isa. liii. 2.*) (e *Rom. viii. 5.*)
(f *Hos. vi. 4.*)

with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the spirit of the Lord.

(g) The spirit of the Lord, reflecting upon their souls, by the glass of the gospel, rays of the divine glories, shining and sweetly harmonizing in the person and mediation of Christ, transforms them into the image of the glory reflected, and draws them into a lasting and comfortable rest in the Saviour.

II. I shall proceed now to explain the nature of *trust* in Christ, the second constituent of saving faith. No sooner does the soul fully perceive how suitable and well qualified Christ is to save ruined sinners, than it trusts in him for it's own salvation. * This act of faith is called a receiving Christ, embracing him, accepting him, coming to him, leaning upon him, and resting on him for salvation. This trust or rest of the soul in Christ consists in two acts, approbation and acquiescence.

* Were I to treat this point scientifically, as some affect to treat all their subjects, even the most practical, I would say, that the full credit we give to the testimony of Christ, is the primary mode of saving faith, which constitutes it's very essence; and trust or rest in him, it's secondary essential mode, necessarily arising from the primary. From the same source do repentance, love, desire, and all the religious affections flow.

(g II Cor. iii. 18.)

1. It implies a hearty approbation of the scheme of redemption in the blood of Christ, as originating from, and infinitely worthy of, the wisdom, mercy, and love of God. *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God*, displayed in the salvation of sinners by Christ! is the language of a believing heart--It cheerfully receives, and gives all the praise to, rich and free grace. *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.* (b) Were it left to the believer's own choice, he would choose no other method of salvation. None but what flows from rich mercy and exalts the Saviour, suits either his wretched state, or his wishes. Had he ten thousand souls, he would venture them all upon Christ. Had he ten thousand hearts, they should all be given to

They, therefore, wholly mistake the question, and all their wrangling disputes upon it have no proper object, who contend for repentance going before faith. If they mean a legal repentance, or conviction of sin, this we own is necessary to saving faith; yet even this is the effect of a general belief of divine testimony. But if they mean a genuine gospel repentance, (and no other repentance properly deserves that name, or should come into the question,) this it is evident, is the fruit of a believing view of Christ, and cannot be antecedent to it; for the Saviour himself testifieth, *they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him.*

(b Psa. cxv. 1.)

him. Had he ten thousand tongues, they should all be employed in his praise. And all too little ! all infinitely beneath his praise, his glory, or his worth.

2. Trust in Christ more specifically consists in the hearty acquiescence of the soul in him for salvation. It's leading exercise is, a rest in his propitiation for pardon, and then, being accepted in the beloved for grace, for glory, and for every mercy. *He is all in all*--all things to all believers. Content that he do all the work, and have all the praise, they embrace him and his whole salvation, with all their hearts, committing themselves wholly to him, soul, and body, as his trust, and to be employed wholly at his pleasure. In this act of trust, they return to him, and to God in him, as their soul's everlasting rest ; and, according to his gracious promise, find rest to their weary souls. *Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee,* (i) expresseth the exercise of a soul resting in Christ. With a joy which the world knoweth not of, they feed, as on hidden manna, upon such precious words of grace as those ; *I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.* (k) Hence some intelligent and very spiritual divines have described faith,

(i) *Psa.* cxvi. 7.) (k) *Jer.* xxxi. 25.)

as a well pleasedness with Christ and salvation through him. A well pleasedness it is indeed, an entire satisfaction in Christ and the fruits of his mediation--*I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste.* (l)

In order to a more full and distinct perception of the nature of trust in Christ, let it be observed, that *we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered unto us in the gospel.* (m) Faith is the very echo of the soul to the gospel offer--*so we preached, and so ye believed.* (n) In like manner as we delivered unto you the testimony of Christ, ye received it, and rested upon him for salvation.

1. The gospel offers Christ fully in all his offices, *for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.* And faith corresponding fully with the offer, accepteth him as the only remedy for ignorance, guilt, slavery and every misery to which sin hath subjected a fallen world. Beholding his fulness, the soul replies, *In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.* (o) Not only justifying righteousness, but grace and strength for every duty, and every gracious exercise. The gracious heart thirsts as well for holiness and

(l Cant. ii. 3.) (m W. st. Con. Quest. 86.) (n II. Cor. xv. 11.) (o Isa xlv. 24.)

instruction, as for pardon; as well for deliverance from sin, as from wrath; and in one word, for every blessing the Saviour has to bestow. But hypocritical professors, like the harlot, would divide the Saviour;--would take pardon from him, without holiness;--salvation from hell, without qualifications for heaven. Nay, nothing do they more dislike than holiness and communion with Christ; *Without which no man shall see the Lord.*

2. The gospel offers Christ in due order,--Christ himself first, and then his gifts. It inviteth us to come to him, and promiseth rest upon our coming. *To as many as received HIM to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.* (p) Christ himself is the *immediate* object of a believers trust and affections, the *secondary* object is the promise of being heirs of God, and joint heirs of the inheritance with him. He is high in their esteem above every created object, *the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely.* (q) Whereas the hypocritical professor looks to the blessing only, but neglects the dispenser of it--Snatcheth at the promise, but rejecteth the promiser--Gives Christ his hand, but with-holds his heart.

3. The gospel offers Christ and all the blessings of his purchase, *freely, without money and without price;* (r) and faith, disclaiming all goodness

(p *John. i. 12.*) (q *Cant. i. 10. 16.*) (r *Isa. lv. 1.*
Rev. xxii 17.)

wrought in or done by the creature, as a ground of trust, in whole or in part, dependeth solely upon the righteousness and grace of Christ for pardon and complete salvation--*Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.* (s) Here it is evident the Apostle rejecteth all his own righteousness of every kind, both inward frames, and outward duties, as *loss and dung,--as filthy rags*. Instead of trusting any thing in himself or done by him, as righteousness, or as giving him a right to believe, or hope for acceptance through Christ, the true believer sees that his best duties and frames are so deeply stained with sin and self, that he wonders God had not mingled his blood with his sacrifices.--He is persuaded that his tears, his repentance, his prayers, and every duty, all need washing in the blood of Christ, as well as his person--therefore he comes to him as *poor, wretched, miserable, blind and naked*;--for *Gold tried in the fire*, that he may be *rich*; for *white raiment*, that he may be *cloathed*; and for; *eye-salve*, that he may *see*; (t) taking his encouragement to believe from the gracious call of the gospel, only--and they who expect salvation upon any other terms, bewray their ignorance of the Gospel, and deceive their own souls.

(s *Phil. iii. 8. 9.*) (t *Rom. iii. 17. 18.*)

The only ground of real trust in Christ shines with bright evidence in the faith of Abraham, the father and example of the faithful in believing, *who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that word which was spoken, so shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, being about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb, He staggered not at the promise through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God: and being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was also able to perform.* (u) His faith, laying hold on the naked word of promise, rose superior to every objection of reason from the strongest natural impediments. In like manner his spiritual seed, neither trusting their own righteousness in any shape, nor kept off by discouragement from the deadness and barrenness of their own unbelieving hearts, take hold of the word of promise, and plead to it, *Lord do as thou hast said.* (v)

But the false professor builds on a very different foundation--He trusts as his righteousness, his convictions, his repentance, his frames, and his duties performed with some seriousness--or he hopes these will recommend him to Christ, that on account of them, the righteousness of Christ may recommend him to the favour of God. Thus he makes a savour of his religious exercises, substituting them instead of the righteousness

of Christ; or uniting them with his righteousness, as the ground of his pardon and acceptance with God, he divides his salvation between himself and the Saviour. Mistaking the design of such promises as this; *come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,* (w) he connects the promise of rest with his distress, not with coming to Christ; whereas the promise is to be connected with believing, or coming to Christ, not with his distress as a condition either of his right to the blessing, or his right to come for it; and his distressful case is mentioned, to point him out as it were, by name, and invite him to come to Christ for a free salvation. As though our Lord had said, ye labouring and sin-sick souls, who can find rest nowhere, come unto me, and I will ease you of all your burdens, and give rest to your weary souls. But mistaking the design of the offer, as we have observed, the deceived sinner takes hold of the promise, not of the Saviour;--appropriates, the blessing, not because it is freely offered, but because he has something to offer for it. This is a subtle deceit of the heart, a fine spun thread of self righteousness, with which many deceive themselves, especially in seasons of common awakenings. Upon this hidden rock they dash to pieces, just when they seem to be arriving to the haven of rest. These are the fatal mistakes, I doubt not of too many zealots in our day. I shall conclude this discourse with a few brief observations.

1. What ground of lamentation is it, and how surprising, that the far greatest part of those who profess the name of Christ, and the scriptures to be his word, have, notwithstanding, so little of him in their religion, and are such strangers to the doctrine of faith in his blood, for salvation. Christ is the substance of both the old testament, and the new--His atonement, with the nature and necessity of faith in a crucified Saviour, are leading doctrines of revelation, and none are more frequently held up to view in the oracles of God. Is it not then amazing, that those doctrines, frequently taught as they are, and important as they are, should be treated by multitudes, as mere idle and useless tales of the day?--And that many who are blessed with favourable advantages for instruction, and pay a respect to the gospel, in profession; yet, in practice, do still go *about to establish their own righteousness*, and will not *submit themselves to the righteousness of God*. (x) Outward rites of worship, either of man's devising or God's appointing, duties, frames of the mind, or any deception whatsoever, will quiet their consciences, without the sprinkling of the blood of Christ! How strong must their deception be! How subtle the operations of legal pride in their deceived souls! How deeply rooted their unbelief! How thick the veil of ignorance that clouds their carnal and blinded hearts.

(x Rom. x. 3.)

2. From what hath been said, many professors of religion might be easily convinced, did they yield to the evidence of it, that they have not the true faith of the gospel, but are still held in the chains of unbelief and condemnation! For *he that believeth not is condemned already.* (y) They who rest in a general belief that Christ is the Son of God, and Saviour of the world- without a sense of their need of him and without a particular application of him, to their own souls, have never embraced the Saviour, by a living faith--They who rest in a general blind notion of mercy without respect unto justice, neither believe his justice nor his mercy; but are under the curse of the woe denounced against *them that are at ease in Zion* (z) and settling *on their lees, say in their heart, the Lord will not do good nor will he do evil* (a) They who feed upon empty scientific speculations, without scriptural discoveries of his glory, and all who *see no beauty in him that we should desire him*, have never fed upon him, as hidden manna, nor had *the arm of the Lord revealed to them.* (b) The servants of sin, either of heart or life, are under the power of unbelief; for it is the promise of Christ to the faithful, *that sin shall not have dominion over them.* (c) All who rest in any thing short of Christ for salvation, have no interest in the Saviour--On a forced, or furious zeal, for certain opinions, or for a sect that might have obtained some character for purity

(y *John. iii. 18.*) (z *Amos. vi. 1.*) (a *Zeph. i. 12*)
 (b *Isa. liii. 1. 2.*) (c *Rom, vi. 14.*)

and zeal--On the piety of ancestors; *we have Abraham to our father* (d) on the outward privileges of their Church, as the boastful Jews of old, who cried, *the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these* (e) or those who rest on their outward duties and sanctity, as the self-righteous Pharisee; *God I thank thee that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican; I fast twice in the week, and pay tithes of all that I possess* (f) Those who *put their hand, to the plough, and look back, are not fit for the kingdom of heaven,* (g) but clearly manifest that there is in them an *evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.* (b) These seem to begin in the Spirit, but end in the flesh; and it is happened to them *accordidg to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.* (i) Of all the classes of unbelievers these sink deepest into the gulph of apostacy; and, of all others some of them become the most ungenerous and bitter enemies to christianity. Most dangerous, indeed, and deplorable is their case; *for the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it;--but beareth thorns and briers, is rejected, and nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.* (k) These various characters, and each of you who have never experienced the operations of a living faith, are yet in unbelief, and *shall die in your sins,* (l) unless

(d *John. viii. 39.*) (e *Jer. vii. 4.*) (f *Luke. xviii. 11. 12.*) (g *Luke. ix. 62*) (h *Heb. iii. 12,*) (i *II Pet. ii. 22.*) (k *Heb. vi. 7. 8.*) (l *John. viii. 24.*)

you speedily apply for pardon to that blood, which you have profanely trodden under foot.

3. I most earnestly beseech unbelievers, of every description, to acknowledge your character fully and freely. Admit the conviction of your guilt and danger, fall at the feet of mercy, and beg for the life of your souls. By all the terrors of perishing, by all the joys of salvation, and by all the regard you should pay to the happiness of your never dying souls, I intreat you to deceive yourselves no longer, but awake from your fatal security, & flee from the wrath to come unto the Lord Jesus Christ, as your only safety. Many have a testimony in their conscience, that they are in a state of sin and awful condemnation, who, nevertheless, do not fully own their guilt to their Judge and Saviour but with infidel Jews, in our Saviour's day, quench the conviction, and would gain the time, by still requiring further signs of what they already have sufficient evidence, did they not close the eyes against the light. Their aversion to the pangs of conviction, and the self-denying exercises necessary to their relief, are the reasons of their soul-ruining delay, untill a more convenient season. Sad infatuation! Dangerous, awfully dangerous conduct. Which are hardest, the momentary pangs of conviction now, or the pains of *the worm that shall never die, and the fire that shall never be quenched*. And if you resolve to enter thoroughly upon the work at any time, is it not better to do it soon than at a

late period. How do you know whether ye shall ever see the time you hope will be a more convenient season? An hour's delay may cost you an eternity of sufferings. Or if ye were certain of the time to come, will repentance be less bitter, or sin the more easily subdued, the longer it is in acquiring strength. For God's sake, for your precious souls' sake, I intreat you to improve the present moment, let not the present opportunity slip. *Now is the accepted time, now the day of salvation.* (m) Therefore *to day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.* Now, and not hereafter; to day, and not to-morrow, is ever the language of scripture calls --Most carefully, therefore, improve the day of life, while it lasts--Improve the day of grace, while it shines upon you; lest your sun set in everlasting darkness.

“Seize the kind promise while it waits,

“And march to *Zion's* heavenly gates;

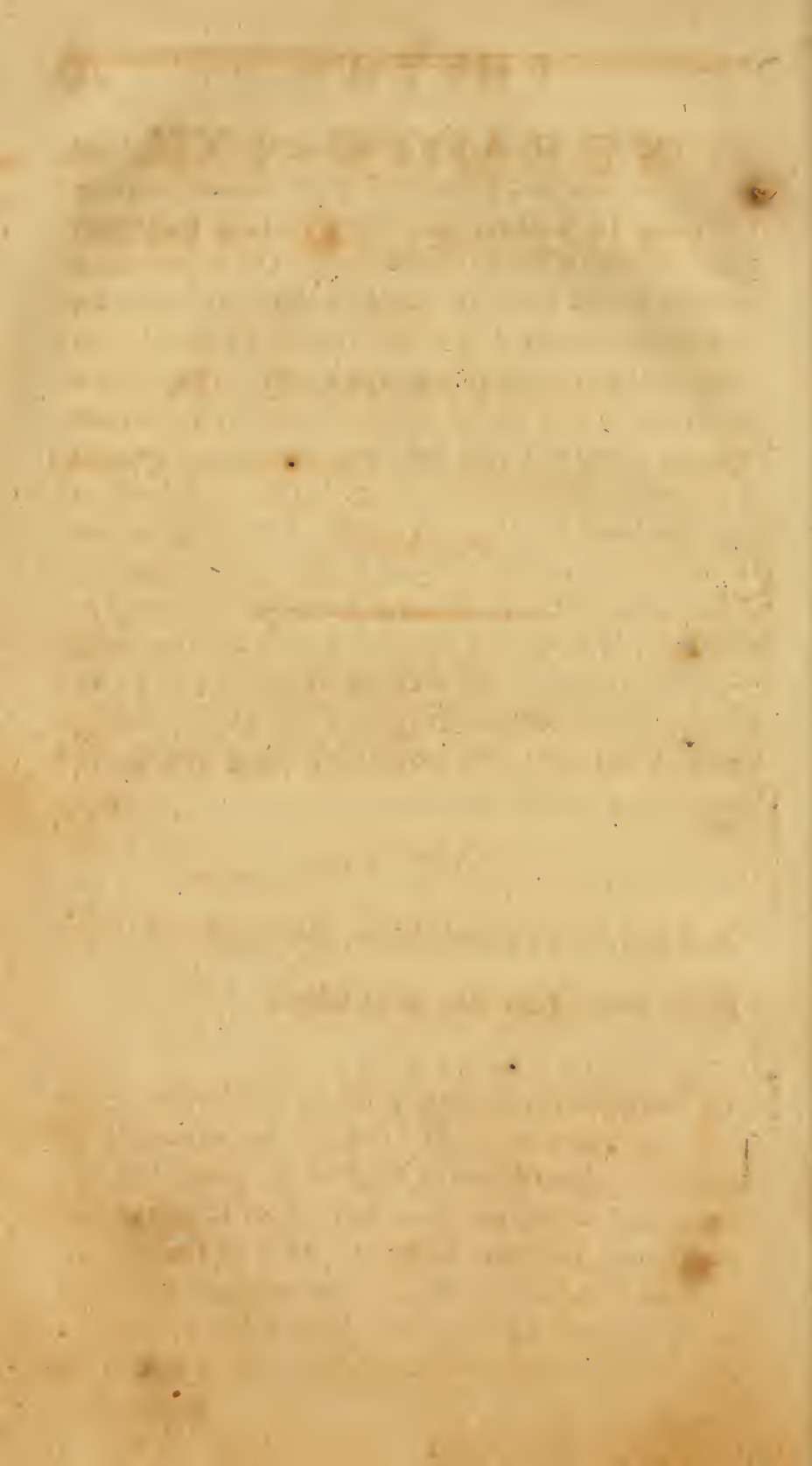
“Believe and take the promis'd rest,

“Obey and be forever blest.”

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(m II Cor. vi. 2.)



SERMON LXII.

THE EXCELLENCY OF SAVING FAITH.

BY

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II Pet. i. 1.

*--To them that have obtained like precious faith
with us.*

I John, iii. 23.

*And this is his commandment, that we should believe
on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.*

The apostle, having treated of obedience to the commands of God, as an evidence of our being heard and accepted of him, lest we should be deceived in a matter of so great importance, informs us in our text of the nature of that obedience, which is an evidence of our being accepted; It is the obedience of faith.--
This is his commandment, that we should believe on

the name of his Son [Jesus Christ]. Faith itself is an obedience to a divine command; and all that obedience which flows from faith, and that only, will prove our sincerity. No mere outward forms whatsoever will constitute a real character of grace. This is his commandment, as though it were the only command, it being the christian compend of all the commandments. The excellency of the grace and duty of faith is the great object exhibited in these words--*Of the grace and duty of faith*, we say; for as it is bestowed, it is a grace; as commanded, it is our duty. The excellency of it appears from it's being, as it were, a summary of all the other commands; as well as from it's immediate object, the name of the LORD JESUS CHRIST; or his person and mediation, and whatsoever as mediator he makes himself known by. On these accounts it is an invaluable gift of heaven to all that have obtained this precious favour of the Lord.

II. I proceed, in the second place, to illustrate the *excellency* of saving faith.

I. The superior excellency of saving faith appears from it's being the *mean* of interesting us in Christ, and all the blessings of his purchase. Through faith we are acquitted of an obligation to eternal punishment, and receive a firm title to all the blessings of grace and everlasting glory--*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (a) By faith we become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ; for ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. (b) All the ends of the earth are invited to look unto Christ, and be saved. (c) But faith is the eye that beholds his fulness, and the glory of the precious blessings contained in the promise. Christ is tendered to us as the gift of God, and eternal life in him; and faith is the hand that takes hold of the gift and appropriates it to ourselves. (d) God has so constituted the new covenant plan of life, that the moment we are united to Christ by faith, we are freed from the curse of the broken law, and received as favourites and children of his family. O believers! could I, in law threatnings set hell and destruction naked before you eyes; could I let you hear the groans, and see the flames, from which you are saved through faith--Could I in gospel promises lay open the third heaven, to let you hear the Halleluias, and see the shining ranks, with which you shall shortly mingle--Or could I disclose to you the unsearchable riches of Christ, and all the searchless treasures of grace and glory, to which by faith you have received an indefeatable title--Each of your hearts must cry out with wonder and praise; How precious is the gift I have received of the Lord! O ye expectants

(a Rom. v, 1. 2.) (b Gal. iii. 26.) (c Isa. xlv. 22.) (d I John. v. 11. John iv. 12, 14. & i. 12. Rev. xxii. 17. compared.)

of glory ! see that ye live as the heirs of such blessings.

2. The excellency of faith appears from the glory of it's object, *God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself--* Or the glory of God, shining in the face of *Jesus Christ*, (e) is it's precious object. I doubt not of the propriety and necessity of means to give a display of the divine perfections to intelligent creatures. For *the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.* (f) And whosoever are wise to observe the good and righteous acts of providence, *even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.* (g) But redemption is the master-piece of all the divine workmanship. In this plan of peace and good will to men, *glory to God in the highest* (h) is proclaimed with loudest accents. And not only is the glory of God in the highest illustrated by this saving plan ; but from it ariseth, in the highest degree, the happiness of rational creatures--Not the happiness of men only, but even of holy angels themselves, who needed not a Saviour, because they never had transgressed. For the knowledge and enjoyment of God are necessary to happiness. The more of his glory is known, the fuller the enjoyment of him : And the more full the enjoyment, the greater must be the happiness result-

(e *II Cor.* v. 19. & *iv.* 6.) (f *Rom.* i. 20) (g *Psa.* cviii. 43.) (h *Luke.* ii. 14.)

ing from it. But in Christ all the moral perfections of Jehovah harmonize, and are most clearly displayed. In the groans of an expiring Saviour, inflexible justice shines with infinitely brighter and stronger evidence, than in all the flames of Sinai, or the more terrible flames of Tophet. Eternal love flows strongest and sweetest in his blood: *Herein is love, not that we loved him, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* (i) And where would mercy have had a medium of discovery, had it not been for the despised cross of Christ?—Mercy, which is *over all his works.* (k) And is not Christ crucified emphatically called *the power of God and the wisdom of God,* (l) for the salvation of all who believe in him? Law and justice required satisfaction, not only adequate to the infinite malignity of sin, and the infinite claims of justice upon the sinner; but that this satisfaction be made in the same nature in which the offence had been given. An angelic offering would not be accepted for a human offence. But were it accepted, and united with the sacrifice of all the human race, the offering would have been infinitely beneath the claims of justice. The whole race of men, with all the angelic host, must have sunk down under the guilt of sin into everlasting perdition. But all these claims are fully answered by the sacrifice of Christ. For the infinite dignity of the divine nature stamped an infinite worth on what he did and suffered in his human nature, on account

(i *I John. iv. 10.*) (k *Psa. cxlv. 9.*) (l *I Cor. i. 24.*)

of it's union with the divine nature in his sacred person. Now law and justice triumph in the salvation of guilty sinners by the propitiation of Christ : For hereby they receive more honour than they could receive by the sufferings of all the creatures to eternity ! A stroke of wisdom this infinitely out-reaching every conjecture of created intelligences ! All their projects, during eternal ages, to satisfy justice and save the sinner, would have perished in the very embryo ! This great mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh, to atone divine justice, and save the guilty sinner, strikes all the angels of glory into everlasting astonishment, while they fall at the feet of the God-man adoring and, with angelic raptures look into the mysteries of redemption in his blood. *Which things the angels desire to look into.* (m) Mysteries, at which faith humbly bows and adores !--Faith which seeth *him who is invisible*, (n) and by which alone we can behold Emmanuel's glories, and the glories of salvation purchased by his blood ; as we shall more fully see in the next particular. When Peter confessed to his Lord, *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God*, his Saviour replies, *Blessed art thou Simon Barjona : for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.* (o) From a heart impregnated with a sense of this blessedness, no doubt Peter in our text hails all who had obtained like precious faith with himself and his fellow-disciples.

(m 1 Pet. i. 12.) (n Heb. xi. 27.) (o Math. xvi. 17.)

3. We learn the superior excellency of faith from the strength and brightness of it's *evidence*. The power of faith is the most noble possessed by mortals, and it's evidence the brightest this side eternal vision; unless we should except inspiration. The evidence of sense only reaches to material objects, and the evidence of reason is confined within the limits of the fallen creature's power; but faith sees *him who is invisible*, and *is the evidence of things not seen*. (p) not seen either by the eye of sense, or reason. It penetrates into the invisibilities of the other world. *ΕΛΕΓΧΟΣ*, rendered evidence, signifies a clear convictive proof, or demonstration. Invisible glories appear evident to the eye of faith, and are more impressible than any objects which daily offer to our sight: For it perceiveth them by a spiritual light;--a light immediately infused into the soul by his almighty power, *who commanded the light to shine out of darkness*. (q) *The spiritual man judgeth* (or discovereth) *all things*. (r)* Instructed from on high, by the power of the Holy Ghost, he hath a spiritual discernment of, and relish for, the transcendent glory of divine objects.

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned; (s) and no unrenewed man hath a spiritual eye to discern them. The doctrine of
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(p *Heb. xi. 1; 27.*) (q *II Cor. iv. 6.*) (r *I Cor. ii. 14.*)
(s *I Cor. ii. 14.*)

the cross of Christ is *foolishness* to the learned Greek, and a *stumbling block* to the self righteous Jew. (t) Was the natural man possessed of all the sublimity of a Longinus and a Homer, all the power of a Demosthenes and a Cicero, all the wisdom of a Solon and Lycurgus, and with all the philosophy and improved knowledge of a Socrates and a Plato; all this notwithstanding, without a principle of faith, the sublime mysteries of the gospel will be foolishness unto him. Yea, did he unite with all these advantages the study of the oracles of God; yet, as to unbelieving Jewish rabbies, who knew not *the Lord of Glory*, (u) the gospel would be a hidden mystery to him, and the preaching of the cross a stumbling block.

But why need we run back to heathen philosophers and Jewish doctors? The whole tribe of infidels, in this and the preceding ages, (some of whom were men of the most acute and improved genius,) are striking examples of this melancholly truth. And many who reject the name infidel, some of them by their corrupt opinions, ever sive of the gospel of Christ; some by their vile practices; and others by their aversion to the power of godliness, proclaim to the world that they have dark and unbelieving hearts. Oh! sin has an awfully blinding and hardening tendency. Therefore are sinners called *children of darkness*, and Satan's territories a *kingdom of darkness*.

(t I Cor. i. 23.) (u I Cor. ii. 8.)

But it is the glory of christianity, that while the mysteries of the gospel are *hid from the wise and prudent*, they are *revealed unto babes*. (v) The weakest child of grace knows more of God, of Christ, of the scheme of salvation and operations of Grace, than the most instructed and cultivated sinners. He may not be as able as they to reason upon those topics; but he sees their attractive beauties, feels their power, and relishes the comforts of them, which they do not. He may not be able to trace the operations of nature in their causes and effects; yet he sees more of, and is more affected with, the divine glories shining through a spire of grass, a single flower, or a drop of cold water, than the graceless philosopher can perceive in all the stupendous works of God, and by the assistance of all his tubes and glasses. For even *through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the power of God*, (w) and see more of his power and glory in their frame, than all the efforts of feeble reason can discern. Let faith behold the glory of God in the face of Christ, and the heart will be prepared to read his glory in all the works of his hands.

4. The excellency of faith appears with striking evidence from it's power and *influence* to bring heaven down to earth, (so to speak,) and give us a present taste of the blessedness to be enjoyed there; for it *is the substance of things hoped for*. (x) It gives them a present subsistence

(v *Mat. xi. 25.*) (w *Heb. xi. 3.*) (x *Heb. xi. 1.*)

in the heart. Faith receives, and is itself, *an earnest of our inheritance, the first fruits of the spirit of glory*. An earnest being part of the promise given in hand, to ensure the whole, is of the very same kind of the thing itself for which it is pledged. Like the believing spies of old, the faith of true believers brings down some clusters of the heavenly Canaan, by the delicious taste of which their souls give a good report of the promised land, and become earnest to take possession of it. It bears no more proportion, indeed, to the happiness of heaven, than a drop to the ocean, or a single ray to the whole body of light in the sun; nor so much. Yet as a ray is of the same nature with the sun, and a drop with the ocean; so faith and it's fruits are of the same nature of heaven itself. Grace is glory begun, and glory is grace perfected.

A brief view of the description given of heaven in the word of God, with the nature and effects of saving faith, may serve to illustrate this subject more fully. Heaven is described as a state of perfect rest, (y) and perfect holiness (z) There the servants of Christ *see his face*;--*see him face to face*, (a) and *there is fulness of joy, and pleasure for-evermore*. (b) But faith, as we have seen, not only receives the account of it's object from testimony, but (by the operations of the Holy Ghost) through that testimony sees

(y *Heb.* iv. 9. *Rev.* xiv. 13. z *I John* iii. 2. *Rev.* xvi. 15. & xxi. 27.) (a *Rev.* xxi. 4. *I Cor.* xiii. 12.) (b *Pla.* xvi. 16

the object itself, beholds it's glory.* It produceth sweet rest & comfort in the soul, (c) purifieth the heart, (d) and *worketh by love*, (e) and *believing in Christ, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory*. (f) Viewing the glory of it's object

(c *Mat.* xi. 28. *Psa.* cxvi. 7. *Cant.* ii. 3.) (d *Acts.* xv. 9.) (e *Gal.* v. 6.) (f *I Pet.* i. 8.)

* The difference between immediate vision, and seeing the object by faith, seems to consist principally, if not wholly, in the mode of discovery, and the degree of their effects respectively upon the mind. Here we are as well encumbered with flesh, as weakened by sin, and view the objects through mediums of sense. The gospel and visible ordinances are glasses through which we view the glory of God, and by which the Holy Spirit reflects the image of that glory upon our minds. But in heaven there will be no need of a glass; a glass would only obscure the vision; as to look at the sun through a glass would weaken and disturb rather than assist the sight. In heaven we shall see the glory of God with evidence as bright and powerful as a frame, strengthened with immortality and enlightened with vision can see and enjoy the infinitely glorious object. By immediate vision I do not mean, that the glorified saints will never behold the glory of God through any of his works. New worlds and new wonders may forever arise, through which he will manifest his glory to them. Nor would I be understood to mean, that they shall look, or that it is possible for any creature to look, directly into the divine essence, without any medium of discovery. How that may be, I cannot tell. However, if they shall behold his glory through means, the means, as well as the capacity for happiness, will be suited to that state of perfection. But when this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruption incorruption, the use of figures to strike the senses shall have for ever ceased. Nor shall the saints in glory, as in the present state, attain to the knowledge of God by weak and tedious deductions; but

with the grounds of trust given by a promising Saviour, the soul is irresistibly, but sweetly drawn to a satisfying rest in him. Blessed prelude of heaven! And viewing this glory, they love it, their hearts are delighted with it. But love to God is the purity of a soul, and joy the triumph of love. The one will ever be in proportion to the other. O believers, would you live free from the bitter reproaches of conscience, and enjoy a heaven upon earth, be much in the exercise of faith. By this you may travel through the promises, and pluck a flower here and a flower there, from which you shall suck the sweets of celestial blessedness.

5. The excellency of faith is derived from it's being the spring of spiritual life, the *moving principle* of all the other graces and holy affections* *The life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (g) Faith worketh by love, as we have seen; for the faith of being loved begets love to it's object. We love him, because he first loved us. (h)*

this fountain of light will pour, with fullest evidence, the inexpressibly bright beams of his glory into their souls, as the sun his rays upon the earth, whether directly from the divine essence, or through his works. Their knowledge will be intuitive, without the least degree of obscurity.

* There are these three sister graces, *faith, hope, charity; but the greatest of these is charity.* 1 Cor. xiii. 13. Charity or christian love, is the greatest in point of du-

(g Gal. ii. 20.) (h 1 John. iv. 19.)

It produceth true repentance ; *they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and mourn for him.* (1) To believe that Christ was pierced by and for our sins, opens the sluices of godly sorrow, and lays the soul low at his feet; and trusting the mercy and truth of his promise, believers are encouraged to look to the living head for gracious influences, to quicken them to the exercise of every grace and christian virtue, by which they are gradually assimilated to and prepared for glory.

My christian brethren, the more you learn the spiritual art of living upon Christ by faith for strength, and for the whole of your sanctification, as well as pardon, the easier will your journey to heaven be, and the greater speed will you make in your way. You make little progress in your way, perhaps, by frequently disputing whether you are in it; and your complaints of darkness and deadness remain, because you do not come immediately to the fountain for light and life. You examine yourselves, and use many means to quicken your souls unto the acts of spiritual life. All this is your duty. But the exercise of faith, the most noble means of all, being too much neg-

ration ; for faith shall be turned into vision, hope into fruition, while love shall eternally enjoy the rewards of victory. But in this life faith takes the lead; for as well love itself, as all the other graces, flow from it, as a spring, and will be in strength in proportion to the strength of faith.

(i. Zac. xii. 10.)

lected, your complaints continue, and they will continue until you apply to Christ by a present direct act of faith. This would change your night into day, and your deadness into life. By this you will obtain light to discern clearly what Christ has done for your souls, and enjoy the comforts of it. And by this you will obtain victory over the body of death, and a growing conformity to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

6. Faith is, most excellent as it is an *active* principle of all *holy obedience*. *For this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.* It is a compend of all christian duties, and the life and spring of them all. Viewing the excellency of the divine law, especially as made honourable by the obedience of Christ, believers *delight in it after the inward man*, (*k*) and are fully reconciled to it as an eternal rule of righteousness. *Love is the fulfilling of the law*, (*l*) and their *faith worketh by love*;--supreme love to God, (*m*) and *love one to another, as he gave us commandment*. (*n*) Their obedience is the willing offering of love;--not forced, but free;--not of constraint, but with a ready mind. The end of their obedience is the glory of God, who is honoured by the fruits of it; and the powerful motive to it, the Saviour's love. *For the love of Christ constraineth us*. (*o*) And viewing the perfection of his righteousness

(*k* Rom. vii. 22.) (*l* Rom. xiii. 10.) (*m* Math. x. 37.) (*n* 1 John. iii. 23.) (*o* II Cor. v. 14.)

and grace, they rest in him for the acceptance of their services as well as of their persons, and strength for the performance of them. *In the Lord have I righteousness and strength,* (p) is the Christian's motto. *I will go on in the strength of the Lord God, making mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only,* (q) is his firm resolution. In the strength of the Lord, or by influences of grace derived from him for the discharge of duty, making mention of his righteousness as the only ground of their acceptance in the performance of it. *I believed,* said David, *therefore have I spoken.* (r) *We also believe,* said Paul, *and therefore speak.* (s) Then do ministers preach with persuasive power and influence, when they are under the powerful influence of faith; and hearers, receiving the word as a message sent from God, drink it in, and feed upon it, as hidden manna. *Sweet are thy words unto my taste.* (t) By faith both preachers and hearers endite good matter in all their religious duties. This dictates prayer and praise in their hearts before they come upon their tongue. This makes one preacher differ from another, one hearer differ from another, and the same person to differ from himself, at different times. When his faith is not in exercise, he is languid, cold and without spiritual activity, in the performance of duty; but when faith is awake he feels, and others feel with him, life and vigour in all his religious duties.

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(p *Isa.* xlv. 24.) (q *Psa.* lxxi. 16.) (r *Psa.* cxvi. 10.)
(s *II Cor.* iv. 3.) (t *Psa.* cxix. 103.)

What has been said on this point at once teacheth the nature of holy obedience, and the necessity of faith to produce it. The principles, motives and ends of such obedience are all evangelical. How different, how widely different from this is the formal, the dead and selfish obedience of carnal professors! O believers! do you thirst for life and communion with God in duty? to that end try to have faith in lively exercise in your souls. This will make Christ's yoke sit easy upon you, and his burden light. This gives such strength and enlargement to the heart, that, though *the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall,--they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up on wings as eagles, they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.* (u)

7. Faith is the most effectual *antidote* against temptation to sin from the devil, the world, or the flesh. Purifying the heart, it produceth in it an habitual relish for holiness, and a fixed opposition to the lusts of the flesh and of the mind. And the more this principle is cultivated by believers, the greater their victories over sin, and the more disposed will they be to *fight the good fight of faith*, until they win the eternal crown. And this is the *victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* (v) While faith views invisible glories, neither the pleasures nor the sufferings of the present time appear

(u *Isa. xl. 30, 31.*) (v *I John. v. 4.*)

worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Neither shall the chilling damps of adversity sink you into despondency, nor the empty puff of prosperity swell your minds, while you keep the promise and faithful promiser in view. Faith will perceive in the world nothing but *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life*--all it's profits uncertain; all it's pleasures bewitching; all it's honours empty bubbles, easily broken by every blast; and all it's applause an infectious breath, apt to corrupt wherever it smites. And the apostle ascribes a peculiar influence to the power of faith, to repel the attacks of our grand adversary. *Above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.* (w) These darts are, in general, the temptations of Satan, that wicked one; but more especially blasphemy and despair injected into the heart--Called *fiery darts* in allusion to the practice of some barbarous nations, who dipped the points of their arrows or darts in poison, that they might inflame the flesh, and more certainly do execution. These secret darts of the malicious foe, inflamed with the venom of hell, create fear and tormenting anguish in the conscience. But no sooner does faith get a clear view of the faithfulness and mercy of an all-sufficient Saviour, than the afflicted combatant rises victorious, and Satan, as a vanquished foe, flies the field. Believers! always hold up your shield, and learn more and

more the due use of it, that with safety and greater ease you may make your way to the crown, through an opposing crowd of snares and powerful enemies.

8. In the last place, faith brings into the souls of believers the noblest *consolation* and *support* under all the sorrows and trials of the present life. The apostle Peter, speaking of the joy of believers in the salvation to which they are kept through faith, adds, *though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations. That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Christ.*

(x) God chooseth and refineth his people in the furnace of affliction; their afflictions try their faith, and their faith supports them under the trial. By faith Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. (y) By faith many of the worthies endured cruel mockings, scourgings, bonds and imprisonments--were stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, slain with the sword;--wandered about in sheep skins, and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented;--wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in caves and dens of the earth. (z)

Accounting their lot hard, we even at this day feel a sympathy with martyrs of old, who endured trials so severe. If taken, however, upon the large scale, it will be found, that God was peculiarly kind to them. For the Son of

(x I Pet. i. 6, 7.) (y Heb. xi. 27.) (z Heb. xi. 36, 37, 38.)

God walked with them in the midst of the furnace; many of them sung in the fire, and some of them have declared, that the flames were to them *as a bed of roses*. The joy of the Lord was their strength, and they experienced the truth of that promise their faith built upon, *As thy days, so shall thy strength be.* (a) I doubt not but the glories of the reward which their faith looked to and tasted, poured such consolation into their hearts as quenched their pain, and was a present reward for their sufferings. But if we look into heaven, what distinguished glory shall we see on the martyr's crown! What superlative blessedness poured into their glorified souls! For a well instructed witness to this truth saith, *Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* (b) Nothing can exceed the strength and glory of this beautiful climax. Human language cannot rise higher. Every step of it throws strength and glory forward upon the succeeding step. Not only *far more*, but *far more exceeding*; nor only *far more exceeding*, but an *eternal weight of glory* shall arise out of the affliction of the saints; and the weight of the glory shall be proportioned to the weight of their afflictions, and the degree of faith's improvement of them.

In our day the faith of believers has not trials of so severe a kind as the antients had to encounter, which may be a reason why it does not

(a Deut. xxxiii. 25.) (b II Cor. iv. 17.)

commonly shine with such distinguished brightness as theirs. Yet every one will have his trials of various kinds, and faith is a blessed mean of supporting him under them all. Is he pained in body or in mind? Faith fixes upon the sure word of promise for relief, and looks forward to the glorious period, when *God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.* (c) Does he bear reproach? In patience he possesseth his soul, in the belief that Christ esteems him, and in due time will make his righteousness shine as the noon day. Do houses, lands, or any worldly possession fail? Faith looks to the purchased inheritance that fadeth not away, and feeds upon the first fruits of it. Do near and dear relations die? Faith says, your best friend is in heaven, Christ your elder brother, your husband, your Saviour, and your God, who, as Elkanah said to Hannah, is not only better to you than ten sons; but infinitely better than all creature comforts.

Believers! abound in the exercise of believing the promises, and resting in Christ for the performance of them; then shall your afflictions sit lighter upon you, and those bitter waters shall be changed into sweetness. Then shall you experience the truth of his promise who cannot lie, *that all things* (even their sharpest trials) *work together for good to them that love God.* (d) Then though you walk through the water and fire of affliction, it's flood shall not

(c Rev. vii. 17.) (d Rom. viii. 28.)

overflow you, nor it's flame kindle upon you. (e) And then shall you say with patient Job; *What hath we received good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?--The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.* (f) On the whole,

Is faith a mean of interesting us in Christ and all the blessings of his purchase? Is it's object most glorious, and it's evidence most bright? Does it give to the soul an earnest of heaven? Is it a spring of spiritual life? a principle of all holy obedience? the best antidote against temptations? and the noblest support and comfort under affliction? How rich then is your treasury, who have obtained this precious gift from the Lord. Although you were stripped of every earthly possession, and, as a poor Lazarus, picked up crumbs at the foot of a rich man's table; you are, notwithstanding, rich. Christ says to you, as to poor Sardis, *I know thy poverty; but thou art rich*, rich in faith--partakers of the soul enriching grace of God, heirs of glory! rich inheritance! what is it's price? Or what can equal it? *No mention shall be made of coral or of pearl: The price of it is above rubies--The Topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold. The fruit thereof is better than gold, yea than fine gold; and the revenue thereof than choice, silver. All the things thou canst desire are not to be compared with it.* (g)

(e *Isa.* xliii. 2.) (f *Job.* ii. 10. & i. 21.) (g *Job.* xxviii. 18, 19. *Prov.* iii. 15. & viii. 16.)

Believers, of whatsoever condition in life you are, high or low, rich or poor, you have infinite reason to praise God for the distinguishing favour. *Faith is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.* (b) May your hearts, impressed with a sense of the riches and freedom of grace, unite in Paul's grateful, but humble profession, *By the grace of God I am what I am.* (i) Ye have been pluckt as brands from everlasting burning, and in the distributions of grace a most precious and soul-enriching lot hath fallen unto you. That Reverend man of God, Mr Thomas Bradbury, was in youth as a wild asse's colt; but after he was converted and in the ministry, when he would see any profane debauchee strolling through the streets of London, he used to say, with tears and great tendernefs, There goes poor Tom Bradbury, had it not been for the grace of God. So each of you, the very best of you, may say, Of all rakes I had been the most brutish and vile, had it not been for the grace of God. O grace! infinitely rich and free grace, eternity can never exhaust it's praise.

(b *Eph.* ii. 8.) (i *I Cor.* xv. 10.)

SERMON LXIII.

PRACTICAL USES FROM THE NATURE AND EXCEL- LENCY OF SAVING FAITH.

B Y

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II Pet. i. 1.

--To them that have obtained like precious faith
with us--

I John, iii. 23.

*And this is his commandment, that we should believe
on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.*

HAVING in the preceding discourses explain-
ed the nature and excellency of saving
faith, and made a few practical reflections, I
proceed to a more full improvement of the sub-
ject.

I. I beseech you, brethren, most seriously and
deliberately to examine whether ye be in the faith,
prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves?

how that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates

(a) It is a matter of the greatest moment, and should be attended to with the greatest care. A deception here will be of everlasting and most terrible consequence to your souls. To assist you in this important duty, to what hath already been suggested in illustrating the doctrine we shall add the following characters of a living faith.*

1. If ye be indeed in the faith, your faith hath an influence upon all your religious duties; as Abel's who offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, as having respect to the atoning sacrifice of Christ. (b) You fall at Jehovah's feet humble and self emptied, as nothing, and less than nothing, before him who *putteth no trust in his saints, and chargeth his angels with folly*. Your only confidence in approaching a holy God, is the throne sprinkled with the blood of the lamb, and his gracious invitation to draw near to it for mercy and grace. Your only trust for the acceptance of your services, as well as your persons, is the righteousness of Christ, and in his strength alone you attempt every duty. Sensible of your insufficiency for

(a 2 Cor. xiii. 5.) (b Heb. xi. 4. Gen. iv. 4.)

* The marks of faith we have taken from the characters of the worthies recorded in the sacred pages, as well because they were of the cloud of witnesses whose faith is held up for our example, as because in them we have the most lively picture of the native operations and effects of saving faith.

any spiritual exercise, and encouraged by the promise of his grace, you look up to him for the gracious aids of the holy spirit. In duties performed from such a spiritual principle, petitions are put up with desire for the blessings requested; sins confessed with sorrow for them; and mercies acknowledged with thankful hearts. Very different from this is the sacrifice of ungodly worshippers. They pray without desire; confess without sorrow; and offer praise on a thoughtless tongue. Nay, their hearts are opposed to the answer of their own prayers, except it be for temporal favours, or merely to be saved from wrath; as Augustine's in the days of his unregeneracy, when he prayed to be made chaste, his heart saying "Not yet, Lord, "not yet." O ye mockers of God! who expect favours for your polluted services, can such hypocritical suits succeed with him? Will hypocrisy and lies procure his favour? Is it any wonder if God cast the dung of your sacrifice in your face, saying, *Who bath required this at your hands?*

2. Your faith, like Enoch's, will appear in a life of communion and holy walking with God. (c) By believing views of his amiable glories shining in the face of Christ, your souls are drawn to him in holy affections, correspondent to his divine glories, in which the life of communion with God consists. And, impressed with a sense of his immediate presence and universal provi-

(c *Heb.* xi. 5. *Gen.* v. 22.)

dence, you walk before him to all well pleasing, as always in his sight: Your conversation is in heaven, from whence you look for the Saviour; and your souls thirst for God, the living God. But graceless professors, alienated from the life of God, are strangers to those devout breathings of a pious heart.

3. Your faith, as Noah's, (*d*) will operate in an holy fear of God. This is frequently laid down in the word of God as a character of the faithful. Not the fear of a slave, who only dreads correction. Not the sottish soul-hardening despair of *the fearful and unbelieving, who shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone*, unless they shall speedily obtain repentance unto life: But such an awe of the majesty, righteousness and goodness of the Lord, (*e*) as will make you tremble at his judgments, while you confide in his mercy, and betake yourselves to Christ for safety from the deluge of deserved wrath. The fear of the reprobate drives him from the Saviour, and torments his soul with horror and dread of God as an avenging judge. This consists with the power and love of sin reigning in the heart. But the pious soul dreads sinning more than suffering, and says, with faithful Joseph, *How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* (*e*) His fear, as in the dutiful child, operates as well in love and holy obedience to his God and father, as in religious caution, lest he should

give him any offence in thought, in word, or in deed.

4. Your faith, as Abraham's, (*f*) will be productive of self denial, and a ready obedience to the divine commands, even those that are most difficult and cross to flesh and blood. Trusting the power, mercy and truth of a promising God, he left his own country and kindred at the call of heaven, and sojourned in a land of strangers and enemies; and (which was still more trying to nature) he attempted at the command of God to offer his beloved Isaac in sacrifice.-- Isaac! the son of promise, the son of his old age, the only son of his beloved Sarah; *accounting that God was able to raise him up from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure.* If ye are Christ's, many sacrifices have you made for his name's sake.--Husbands, wives, parents, children, brothers, sisters, houses, lands; yea, and are determined to part with your own lives, rather than deny his name and religion. (*g*) Not that piety gives a disrelish for lawful enjoyments, or lessens our affections for, much less makes us bitter against, our relatives. It rather sweetens them to us by the lawful enjoyment of them; and excites our gratitude for them, as the undeserved gifts of heaven to us. I doubt not but Adam loved his Eve with a manifold purer and stronger flame before, than ever he did after his fall. But grace will make

(*f* Heb. xi. 17, 18.) (*g* Luke. xiv. 26.)

your hearts say, *These are not my gods.* Giving Christ the throne in your hearts, it will dispose you to leave earth, with all its enjoyments, or yeild them up at his call. Yes! it will cause you *to pluck out a right eye, and cut off a right hand, for his sake;* (b) i. e. not only to part with allurements of the world, but with sins as dear and as pleasant to you as those members of the body. *What have I to do any more with idols?* (i) speaks the resolution of a truly penitent, and believing heart.

But the mere nominal or temporary believer is still wedded to his lusts and carnal pleasures, and by repeatedly turning a deaf ear to the calls and warnings of heaven, is in danger of having the fearful, but just sentence pronounced against him, *Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone.* (k) Freely would he embrace houses, lands, and carnal enjoyments as his only portion, did he not fear the wrath of God. Take these from him, and his heart cries with Micah, *Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more?* (l) But to the sincere believer these are all tasteless without the Lord. Nay, heaven itself would be emptiness to him, should he not find his Saviour there. *To be with Christ, which is far better,* (m) is a leading reason of his desire to be absent from the body. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire*

(b Mark. iii. 23; 47.) (i Hos. xiv. 8.) (k Hos. iv. 17.) (l II Kings. v. 18.) (m Phil. i. 23.)

beside thee, (n) is the native breathing of a gracious soul.

5. Believers, when it is just and necessary, chuse a lot with the despised and afflicted people of God before any earthly pomp and riches. *By faith Moses refused to be called the Son of Pharaoh's daughter; chusing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.* (o) All the power and wealth, the honours and pleasures of the world are empty bubbles, passing shadows, in their esteem, compared with the unfearchable riches and honours of Christ. Communion with him *one day in his courts* is to them *better than a thousand* (p) spent in all the tents of vanity and sin. The saints of whatever condition or degree, they esteem as *the excellent of the earth, in whom is all their delight.* (q) His cause they set before any worldly or private interest: *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem! let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem before my chief joy.* (r) Christ's people are their people, his interest theirs, and what gives a wound to it, toucheth the apple of their eye. The stumbles and falls of religious professors, and the unavoidable weakness and infirmities of the righteous, are their distress, because a wicked world take occasion from thence

(n *Psa.* lxxiii. 25.) (o *Heb.* xi. 24, 25, 26.) (p *Psa.* lxxxiv. 10.) (q *Psa.* xvi. 3.) (r *Psa.* cxxxvii. 5, 6.)

to reproach the cause of Christ, and make themselves easy in their sinning. But they rejoice in the prosperity of Zion; they long, they pray for a revival of religion in churches, and the spread of the gospel in power throughout the whole earth.

Widely different from this is the character of faithless professors, however sober some of them may appear before men. They choose religion when she treads in her silver slippers; but are unwilling to take up their cross, and *follow the lamb whithersoever he goeth*, in good report and in bad. A blast of persecution would soon blow multitudes of those hypocrites off from Christ, and turn them to be bitter enemies to his cause. Give to some of them titles, honours, pleasures and riches, with an empty parade of language or plausible elocution in the pulpit; give to others of them, though it were but a beggarly portion of this world, with dull formality, flimsy dissertations, or dry speculation, or dark, unintelligible and spurious novelties in the pulpit, and they may continue to make some kind of religious professions. But they will not interest themselves about the power of godliness, except it be in opposition to it. True zeal for God they detest; spiritual and zealous Christians, especially ministers, are apt to become objects of their jealousy, their sneer, or their malignant reproaches; and the more so, the more eminent they are for piety, or for any other except convictions in their conscience.

and judgment may be so strong as to suppress their visible opposition. Instead of being grieved, they watch with an eagle's eye for the accidental slips, or unavoidable infirmities of pious people, and magnify their pimples into blotches, as a cover to their own offensive sores; not considering that *their spots are not the spots of God's people*. And, if they cannot get visible blemishes to hold up, they will, with diabolical malice and subtlety, twist and turn every word and action into every shape in order to make some. Like their predecessors of old, they clothe the saints in bear skins, and then hunt them with dogs. Instead of laying it to heart, as an evidence of God's controversy with the church, when the righteous, especially able and faithful ministers, are taken from the earth, those hypocrites rejoice, as though the day would be all their own, these troublers of Israel being removed out of the way. This is the temper especially of ungodly clergymen.

6. In the last place, a steady perseverance and progress in piety are among the best evidences of saving faith. The hearty friends of Christ go from *strength to strength, till they appear before God in Zion*. (s) Of the patriarchs the apostle says, *If they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned; but now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly*. (t) A lively

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(s *Psaln. lxxiv. 7.*) (t *Heb. xi. 15, 16.*)

emblem this of the character of the godly in all ages and places of the world, who, as Paul, *forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God which is in Christ Jesus.* (u) Their backslidings and returns again to God they will have, their winters and their summers, their nights as well as their days. Yet, in general, *the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* (w) And the express testimony of Christ himself is, *Every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* (x) They may not always feel the same sensible affections, as at their first acquaintance with Christ; yet their views of divine objects will be more spiritual and distinct, their faith more steady, their love more solid, their humility more deeply rooted, and their obedience more uniform. Their life is *a life of faith on the Son of God*, and by repeated acts of faith they grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

But they who stop in their course, or turn back, have never set their foot upon the narrow way which leadeth unto life. And they who think they have religion enough, or content themselves with just as much of it as they suppose will barely take them to heaven, or save

(u *Phil. iii. 13, 14.*) (w *Prov. iv. 18.*) (x *John. xv. 2.*)

them from hell, have never as yet had a taste of the pleasures of piety. For there is every motive in faith's object and the experience of grace, to excite those who have obtained it, to press for a more full enjoyment of its comforts. Many who have all the visible marks of believers in Christ, know no more of religious impressions upon their minds, than those they felt many years since.--To them they are obliged to recur back, in order to support their false hope. Or, perhaps, to this end they try to work up in their souls impressions similar to those they felt when they first made an attempt to set out in religion; and there they rest, though their impressions quickly die away, without leaving any lasting change upon their minds. Dangerous deception!

II. Is faith a most excellent gift? Then let those of you who have obtained it, learn your advantages and obligations to make a due improvement of the talent God has graciously put into your hand. He hath bestowed on you an holy principle, the exercise of which will produce a gradual assimilation to himself, & meetness for heaven; and, for those very purposes, hath promised the influences of his holy spirit. You ought therefore to endeavour most carefully to have your faith invigorated and strengthened. In order to this be constant in the exercise of faith; for every habit grows by repeated acts. Be diligent in your attendance on all the means of grace for the cultivation of faith. *For the*

band of the diligent maketh rich. (y) Pray earnestly, as the apostles did, *Lord, increase our faith.* (z) Get clear and distinct views of the nature and design of the plan of salvation, with the nature, extent and freedom of gospel promises; as well those made to Christ in your name, as those made to you for his sake.

For motives to excite you to those improving exercises, consider that a strong faith gives glory to God, and will enable you to live becoming your high calling. It will silence your unbelieving fears, and produce for you strength in weakness, light in darkness, comfort in sorrow, and relief in all your straits. It will make your journey to Zion easy, and smoothe all the rugged steps of your way, open for you a comfortable passage *through the valley of the shadow of death,* (a) and *a joyful entrance into eternal life.* (b) And this will enable you with humble boldness to approach the divine throne for mercy and grace to help you in every time of need.

To plead for purchased mercies upon the strength of a promise is a most useful exercise of faith for promoting the spiritual life, and obtaining all the precious fruits and comforts of it. Did time allow, I would point out the usefulness, and give directions for the exercise of faith in every circumstance in which you can be placed, and to obtain every mercy you crave

(y *Prov.* x. 4.) (z *Luke.* xvii. 5.) (a *Psa.* xxiii. 4.)
(b *Luke.* ii. 29. *II Tim.* iv. 7, 8.)

for time or eternity, for yourselves or others, for individuals or for the church in general. There is not a single case with respect to which your prayers are required, but there is something in the promises suited to it, which you ought to hold up as a plea in prayer. To illustrate this in a few instances only. Do you want pardon for backsliding, and the cure of a backsliding temper? Plead that gracious promise, *I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely.* (c) Do you lament that your souls are as the barren heath in the desert, *which does not see when good cometh?* Plead this and such like words of grace; *Their soul shall be as a watered garden.* (d) Do you feel your need of strength for duty and warfare? Hold up to Christ his own precious word, *My grace is sufficient for thee.* (e) Do you long to see the prosperity of Zion, and rejoice in her joy? Plead the gracious promises of Zion's God to make her *a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of our God;* (f) *To be as the dew to Israel, to make him revive as the corn, grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.* (g) In this soul-quickenings exercise, faith, looking to the mercy from which the promise originated, and the truth engaged for the performance of it, is strengthened to take hold of the Saviour, saying, *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.* (b) Such a wrestling Jacob will be a prevailing Israel.

(c *Hos.* xiv. 4.) (d *Jer.* xxxi. 12.) (e *II Cor.* xii. 9.)
 (f *Isa.* lxii. 3.) (g *Hos.* xiv. 5, 7.) (h *Gen.* xxxii. 26.)

Some of you, perhaps, are saying, "I fear I have no right to plead the promises. Had I tender and spiritual affections, or assurance of my personal interest in Christ, I might venture to rest in him, and plead the promises of his grace. But, alas! my heart is so dark and cold, and stupid, I dare not, I cannot approach him with confidence." Your fears, brethren, indicate that you labour under mistakes injurious to your comfort and progress in piety. You wish to know how good you are, and look for spiritual affections, or assurance of actual interest in Christ, as your warrant, at least in part, to apply to him for pardon and grace. But he will let you see how bad you are, and make you come self emptied to the fountain of free grace for all your supplies. Your hesitation about your right to come, because of your want of powerful spiritual affections, is a dreg of that pride and unbelief, which at first held you off from a closure with Christ, until you should be better prepared to apply to him. You should come immediately to him for those affections, which you wish for as your encouragement or warrant to come. It will be useful for you to take notice of the distinction between an actual right in the blessings of the promise, and a right to come to Christ for them; between the grounds of trust, and an assurance of actual interest in him. Assurance of actual interest is founded, in part, upon pious exercises of the heart as evidences of a gracious state, the agreement of which with the

marks of true piety laid down in the word of God is cleared and confirmed by the witness of the spirit. But the sole ground of trust in Christ for pardon and grace is the full and free tender thereof in the offers and promises of the gospel. Therefore if you cannot ascertain your actual interest in these ; yet you may be assured they give you a right or warrant to apply for the blessings contained in them. Therefore if you cannot come as a saint, come at the call of the gospel as a sinner, as one of Adam's needy and ruined family. The judicious and spiritual Doctor Owen observes, that "the grounds and essential acts of faith are always the same." In every succeeding act, as well as in it's first act, you must come to Christ for grace and salvation as guilty, unworthy and helpless sinners, upon the encouragement of gospel overtures only, without respect to any goodness that is in you, or done by you, as giving you a right to the blessings of the promise, or to apply for them. And as long as you attempt to come upon any other footing, so long will you be disappointed, so long will your preplexing doubts and fears remain.

A present direct act of faith, upon the encouragement of the gospel offer alone, is the way of safety, and the only way of relief from all your complaints. . This will make what was darkness before shine with evidence as noon day. And without this in vain will you look for spiritual affections, or assurance of personal in-

terest in Christ and his salvation.

III. Is it the command of God to believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ? and is the grace of believing his unmerited gift? what a precious door of hope does this open to the convinced sinner, who is solicitously enquiring, *What shall I do to be saved?* The answer is ready; *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.* (k) Here you have the encouragement of a command with a promise. The command is much; for it makes it your duty to believe, and secures you against a charge of presumption for attempting your duty. A promise united with the command much more; for it secures the blessing, when by grace you shall have complied with the order. BELIEVE, AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED. Enter in at this door, take hold of this hope, and you shall have inheritance with apostles themselves, in the same manner they obtained it, and upon the very same grounds.

Perhaps some afflicted soul may be saying “What grounds have I to expect that the Lord
“would make me welcome? Although he be
“able and willing to save other penitent and
“tender hearted sinners, I fear he will never
“save me, my heart is so vile, my practice has
“been so base, and my sins so heinous, being
“committed against much light and love, many

“strivings of the holy Spirit with my conscience,
 “and many calls of grace repeatedly refused.
 “What shall I do? If I knew that my name was
 “written in the lamb’s book of life; or if I had
 “a broken heart and tender affections, I would
 “venture to believe on Christ. But how can I
 “trust that he will receive me, hardened as I
 “am, filthy as I am, guilty, uncommonly guilty,
 “as I am? ah, my heart is harder than adamant,
 “viler, if possible, than hell itself!” Piti-
 able case indeed, but not desperate. Your
 objections, however, arise from some mistakes
 dishonouring to Christ, and injurious to your
 own souls. (1) You place the decree of God as
 a bar in the way of your duty, and wish for the
 knowledge of your election as your encouragement
 to believe; whereas faith is the way to assure
 a soul of it’s calling and election. Was there
 but one elect vessel upon earth, it is your duty
 to believe at the divine command, and prove by
 your faith that you are that one. You refuse
 to obey the revealed will of God, which makes
 it your duty to believe in the name of his Son,
 unless he will disclose unto you his secret counsel.
 This is rebellion, and a bold invasion of JEHOVAH’s right. *For secret things
 belong unto the Lord our God; but revealed unto us,
 and to our children.* (1) By all the regard you
 owe to his authority and your own salvation, I
 beseech you to invade the divine prerogative no
 longer, nor refuse the mercy so graciously ten-

dered to you. (2) You look for encouragement to believe, in part at least, from yourselves, and not wholly from the Lord. You seek for religious frames as your recommendation to Christ; whereas you should come to him without money and without price. You must come to him just as you are, or never come at all--come as hard hearted, polluted, guilty and helpless sinners, upon the encouragement of free grace only. But you try to wash yourselves, that you may come to the fountain to be washed more clean--to heal yourselves, in part, and then come to a physician to perfect the cure. (3) This implies a secret distrust of the power and grace of Christ to save sinners so guilty and vile as you are, unless you do something to lessen the aggravations, and diminish the strength of your sins. I ask you, brethren, Is Christ an imperfect Saviour? Can he only save sinners of a smaller size? Is the efficacy of his blood and grace limited? Do they need the aid of your obedience and merit? Is he a liar, and his word a lie? All these blasphemies your unbelieving hearts impute to the Lord. To say you are willing to be saved by Christ, but he is unwilling to save you, is a slander thrown out against the heavens--Yes, it is a lie! *For he that believeth not the record God gave of his son, hath made him a liar.* (m) And this is his record, that Christ is able and willing to save the chief of sinners. *Ye will not come*

unto me, that ye might have life, (n) is the testimony of the blessed Jesus himself. How often, says he, would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. (o) These, with many other divine testimonies, charge the unwillingness wholly to the sinner's account. Christ is willing to save you; but you are unwilling to be saved by him on his own terms. The enmity of your hearts against God and the scheme of salvation by Christ is the sole cause of your non-compliance with the calls of the gospel.

Cease then to cast stumbling blocks in your own way. The command of God to sinners without exception to believe, is a sufficient warrant for you to go upon, and there is every motive in the glorious object of faith held up to you, THE NAME OF HIS SON JESUS CHRIST, to excite your trust in him. He is Emmanuel, God in our nature; therefore complete in office-characters, and there is an infinite virtue in each of them for your salvation. *In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; (p) for he is the LORD, the LORD GOD, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgressions, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty. (q) This is his name; for God's name is in him. (r) Are you most wretched and miserable? He is most MERCIFUL! And his mercy reacheth down to the*

(n *John. v. 10.*) (o *Mat. xxiii. 37.*) (p *Col. iii. 9.*)
(q *Exo. xxxiv. 6.*) (r *Exod. xxiii. 21.*)

very border of hell, to raise up objects of its eternal praise. Are you most undeserving and hell-deserving? He is most GRACIOUS! and his grace waits not for the creature's goodness, but bestows it, and infinitely rises above all the deserts of sin. *For where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.* (s) Have you long withstood all the calls of grace, and all the persuasives of redeeming love? He is LONG SUFFERING! his calls continue until the eleventh hour, and till the last moment of that hour. In the same hour he raised the penitent thief from the cross to the crown. Has your life been a scene of countless and most base abominations? every action, every word, and every thought a polluted stream! He is ABUNDANT IN GOODNESS: Infinitely great in goodness, and infinitely good in greatness! His pardoning love and goodness is an ocean without a bottom, a sea without a shore. It purged a Magdalene of seven devils, and formed her into a shining star of glory. It washed the blood of persecution out of Saul's guilty conscience, and changed him from a persecuting Saul into a preaching Paul. It has saved millions of Adam's ruined family; and is it not sufficient for the salvation of one perishing sinner? Were you chargeable with the guilt, and infected with the stain, of the whole fallen race, the blood and grace of Christ are infinitely more powerful to save, than all this would be to destroy you. And he who is ABUNDANT IN TRUTH, has pledged his faithful

word, that if ye be obedient to the call of grace, *though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; tho they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.* (t) He invites him that willeth, to take *the water of life freely.* (u) Do you want salvation? come and take it as the gift of God. How extensive that generous call, *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth?* (w) If ye be in the earth at all, this gracious invitation takes you in. Do not then cast yourselves out by unbelief. He counsels you to buy of him *gold tried in the fire, white raiment, and eye salve.* (x) Did this wonderful counsellor ever give wrong advice? He intreats you *to be reconciled to God.* (y) Shall the heavens come down to you in supplications? and will not you cry to the heavens, and trust an intreating Saviour for grace?--It is his own gracious PROMISE, *Him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out.* (z) Shall THE AMEN, *the faithful and true witness,* be exposed to the disadvantage of man, to say, and not to do; to promise, and not perform? Unbelief says, he will cast you out; the promise says, he will not cast you out. Satan says, he will cast you out; Christ says, *Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.* Now which is to be credited, unbelief, or the promise?--Satan, or Christ? and his promise he has sealed with his OATH, *that by (these) two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled*

(t) *Isa. i. 18.* (u) *Rev. xxii. 17.* (w) *Isa. xlv. 22.*
 (x) *Rev. iii. 18.* (y) *II Cor. v. 20.* (z) *John, 6. 37.*

for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us. (a) Here you have the promise of Jehovah, sanctioned by his eternal oath, to excite you to flee to Christ for refuge from the pursuit of avenging justice. *As I live saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. (b)* As though Jehovah had said, I pledge my eternal life upon it, I forfeit all the glories of Godhead, if ye fail of eternal life, who turn to me by faith and repentance. Search all the records of earth and heaven, and will you, can you, find security equal to this?

Let unbelief then hide its head, and never more utter its reproaches against the God of truth and grace. I beseech you by all the tears and blood of the son of God, by all his glorious characters, by all his gracious offers, by all his pressing calls, by all his alluring invitations, by all his moving intreaties, by all his tender mercies, by all his redeeming love, and by all the strength of his promise, confirmed with his almighty oath:--by all these I beseech, I obtest, I adjure you, in his great name, no longer to refuse the tenders of rich grace; but give glory to God by believing the record he hath given of his son, and embrace him as your Saviour with all your heart.

It may be, some of you are saying, These

(a *Heb. 6. 18.*) (b *Ezek. 33. 11.*)

messages of peace and love are joyful tidings indeed ; but, alas ! my stupid heart will not receive them. Ah ! this heart, this hard, this unbelieving heart ! Ten thousand worlds for an heart cordially disposed to embrace Christ as my Lord and my Saviour ! *O ye afflicted, tossed with tempest and not comforted ; lay your hearts at the foot of the cross, and see if pardoning blood and love will not melt and soften them. Earnestly and incessantly plead the promise of the holy spirit, to create in you a new heart, and take the heart of stone out of your flesh. O Lord ! heal me, and I shall be healed ; turn me, and I shall be turned.* Beware of suffering your convictions to die, lest, like Ephraim, ye be unwise sons, *tarrying long in the dangerous place of the breaking forth of children.* Steadily persevere in importunate suits, until ye obtain the blessing.

Grace, indeed, is sovereign, and nothing done by the creature can deserve it. This you must know and acknowledge. At the same time, continue to plead the riches and freedom of it, with humble hope in divine mercy. To this end were all the examples and overtures of it exhibited in the gospel. Did you ever read, is there any record in the sacred oracles of one spurned from the feet of mercy, who would abide by her door post's, and would not go without a blessing ? Did not the publican, pleading mercy, go to *his house justified rather than the other ?* (c) rather than the self-righte-

ous pharisee? When Ephraim, bemoaning himself, and struggling with a perverse heart, *as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke*, prayed, *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned*; the Lord answers, *Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since the day that I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.* (d) And when the perishing, self-condemned prodigal resolved to confess his guilt, and plead grace, the father of mercies *saw him a great way off, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.* (e) Did you follow the allusion here, you might (so to speak) see the quick eye of mercy discerning the first movements of a returning sinner towards God, the swift feet of mercy running to meet him, the kind arms of mercy extended to receive him, a kiss of mercy to hail him, and seal a sense of pardoning love upon his heart. May the Lord increase your sense of the need of mercy, excite your hope of it, aid your wrestling for it, and receive you with the like distinguishing marks of favour and love.

IV. In the last place, from the nature and excellency of the grace and duty of faith, let unbelievers learn their guilt, their danger, their remedy, and their duty. Faith is a most excellent grace; unbelief, therefore, which is its direct opposite, must be a most heinous sin. When Christ promiseth the holy spirit to con-

(d Jer. xxxi. 18; 20.) (e Luke. xv. 17; 20.)

since the world of sin, he adds, with peculiar emphasis, *Of sin, because they believe not in me*; (f) as though it were, as indeed it is, the basest, the most dangerous crime. Of all others, it is a sin of the highest aggravation. For while other sins strike at the law of God, this strikes more immediately at the grace of the gospel: It denieth all the perfections of God, especially his mercy and truth: It refuseth Christ the honour of your salvation: It contemneth his threatnings, discrediteth his promises, rejecteth his grace, slighteth his love, insulteth his pangs, and, with infidel Jews, cries, *Crucify him, crucify him*. It opens his closed wounds, and makes them bleed afresh! What a dismal tragedy is acted over again, in all our congregations, every sabbath, and every sacrament! every unbeliever coming with the dagger concealed in his heart, to thrust into the heart of the Lord of glory! The privacy of the enemy renders it the more dangerous to the soul. It lies deeply concealed in the heart under many masks; and is therefore the last foe discovered by the convinced sinner. But when discovered, how horrid does the monster appear! It addeth malignity to all his other crimes; for it not only pierceth the Saviour in a peculiar sense; but bindeth all his other sins fast upon him, and puts an aggravation into all the pains due for sin. *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.* (g) *He that believeth not, shall not*

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(f *John*. xvi. 9.) (g *John*. viii. 24.)

see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. (b)
And He that believeth not shall be damned, (i) is
 the testimony of the holy Ghost himself.

Awful condemnation! The punishment of Tyre and Sidon, of Sodom and Gomorrah, shall be light compared with yours, O ye neglecters of the great salvation, purchased with the blood of God! If ye remain in unbelief, ye shall sink down in Tophet's burning gulph, far below the vilest Sodomite. With the weight of law-curses, you shall sink under the much heavier weight of the gospel sanction, DAMNATION FOR UNBELIEF! Fearful sentence! Wrath aggravated to the highest by rejecting the only begotten son of God, the richest gift of everlasting love! *For if he that despised Moses' law died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be accounted worthy, who hath trodden under foot the son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing.** Dreadful, inexpressibly dreadful will be the enquiry after blood, the slighted blood of the Son of God!

(*b* John iii. 36.) (*i* Mark xvi. 16.)

* Heb. x. 28, 29. Some have adduced this text in support of their unscriptural doctrine of the saints' falling totally and finally from grace. Others have been at much pains to adapt it to the common sanctification of graceless professors, from which many fall away. But the sense of the words will appear very natural and easy by a due attention to the scope of the apostle's argument in the context, and throughout the epistle. For, as the

Hear this, ye Christ' despisers, and tremble. That blessed name, in which you are commanded to believe, proclaims joy to true believers, and opens a blessed door of relief to convinced sinners; but it speaketh terror to all who continue in impenitence and unbelief. He is *the LORD GOD, merciful and gracious*; but *he will by no means clear the guilty. Beware of him, (saith his Father,) and obey his voice, for he will not forgive your transgressions, for my name is in him. (k)* My justice as well as mercy is in him. These always unite in perfect harmony. Mercy will not pardon the sinner to the prejudice of justice; and justice necessarily exacteth punishment of impenitent offenders. If, therefore, ye would be saved, ye must yield obedience to the gospel

(*k* *Exod. xxiii. 21.*)

learned and judicious doctors, OWEN and GUYSE, observe, *the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified*, rather relates to Christ, who was consecrated to his priestly office by his own blood, than to him *who counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing*: for the son of God is the immediate antecedent, and the apostle's design was to aggravate the sin of apostates, from a consideration of *the worth and dignity of the person they slighted and abused*. And as the father is said to have sanctified Christ, or set him apart to his mediatorial office, and Christ to have sanctified or dedicated and set apart himself to it by his death, (John x. 36. & xvii. 10.) so he was sanctified to his priestly office in heaven, by the blood of the new covenant, answerable to the sanctification of Aaron and his sons to the high priesthood for the service of the sanctuary, by the blood of the Mosaic covenant, Lev. viii. 30. And the scheme of this epistle for comparing Christ and the high priest under the law naturally leadeth us to this sense.

call, by accepting the offer of salvation through Christ. His blood is the only propitiation for sin, and it is all-sufficient to save the worst of you: *For the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.* (l) And sinners, without exception, are commanded to believe in his name. Mercy reacheth down to you in the hand of a promise, pardon bought and sealed with the blood of Jesus!

Kiss then, O guilty sinner! *kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way.* (m) This blood speaketh *better things than that of Abel.* (n) Abel's blood cried for vengeance; Christ's blood speaks peace and good will to rebel men. But if ye refuse him that speaketh from heaven, presently the peace speaking voice of the lamb, will change into the rage of the lion of the tribe of Judah, roaring for his prey! Haste then, brethren, and without delay flee to Christ as your only refuge from the storm of impending wrath. May the Lord of his infinite mercy convince you of your need of the Saviour, and by the almighty power of grace persuade your reluctant hearts to believe in the name of his son Jesus Christ.

AMEN.

(l) John, i. 7.) (m) Psa. ii. 12.) (n) Heb. xii. 24.)

S E R M O N L X I V .

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

attested by the

SPIRIT O F PROPHECY.*

BY

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Revelation of St. John, xix. 10.

--I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren, who have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

W e may not imagine that the Father of our spirits requires us to receive the Christian religion without sufficient evidence of its divine origin; nor, on the other hand, that it can be rejected by any person, to whom it is thus offered, but at his utmost peril.

* This sermon was preached at New Haven, September 11, 1792, by appointment of the GENERAL ASSOCIATION of the State of Connecticut.

This consideration is of the most serious importance ; and, at a time like the present, when infidelity is struggling for reputation and dominion, pleads loudly with the ministers of Christ, to call the attention of their hearers to the solemn attestations, which authenticate the religion of the bible.

If we take for granted the superlative excellence of the Christian system, which recommends itself to every conscience as worthy of God, and conducive to the perfection and felicity of men, the chief *external* proofs of it's divine original result from *miracles* and *prophecy*.

The former of these having been discussed by a reverend brother, who has gone before me in this lecture, it is proposed, on the present occasion, to attempt an illustration of the latter.

We learn from the mouth of a holy angel, what a mighty stress is laid in heaven, and ought to be laid in earth, on scripture prophecy, as the standing testimony, which the divine Father gives to his holy Son Jesus ; & of consequence, to that religion which bears his name. For it is a holy angel who declares in the text, *The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*; that same angel, no doubt, to whom Jesus Christ committed the revelations contained in this book, *to shew to his servants things which must shortly come to pass*, and by whom he *sent to signify them to his servant John*.

This ministring spirit first raises in the mind of the apostle a tide of grief and astonishment, by a vision of the horrid Roman anti-christ; and then an extacy of joy, by a display of the hallelujahs, which should resound in heaven on occasion of his fall and ruin. The holy apostle so far forgets himself in his rapture, as to offer him an act of religious adoration. *I fell at his feet to worship him.* The humble seraph refuses the offer with these words, *See thou do it not.* And the reason follows: *For I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren, who have the testimony of Jesus--for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*

That this declaration and testimony may have their full effect, it is designed, as divine grace shall enable,

I. To make some remarks on the *spirit of prophecy.*

II. Observe the singular propriety with which it is called the *testimony of Jesus.*

III. Exhibit the evidence by which it proves to us the divine authority of the Christian religion.

I. I am to make some remarks on the spirit of prophecy.

The word *prophecy* in the text is taken in it's strict and most proper sense, for the *unerring*

foresight and prediction of future events. In this sense it must be considered to be the peculiar prerogative of the omniscient God, and of those who are commissioned by him. As such he is pleased to challenge it, when he says, I am God, and there is none else, I am God and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things which are not yet done.

The prophets of God have accordingly with one consent utterly disclaimed all ability in themselves to remove the vail from future events, and professed to speak in the sacred name neither more nor less than was imparted to them by the holy Spirit. When Pharaoh says to Joseph, *I have heard of thee that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it; It is not in me,* he replies, *it is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer. God hath shewed to Pharaoh what he is about to do.* And when on a similar occasion the king of Babylon enquires of Daniel, *Art thou able to make known to me the dream and the interpretation?* what is his answer? *The secret which the king hath demanded, the wise men cannot shew unto the king; but there is a God in heaven who revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king what shall be in the latter day. But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom which I have more than any living.*

Nothing can be more solemn than the manner in which the divine prerogative thus chal-

lenged by the MOST-HIGH, and confessed by his prophets, is represented to St John in his second vision recorded in the book of Revelation. He first hears a voice, as of a trumpet, saying, *Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.* Then he has a vision of God the Creator, on a glorious throne surrounded by the heavenly host; having in his right hand a sealed book, in which were written the divine counsels respecting future events. He then hears a voice of a mighty angelic herald, proclaiming a challenge to the whole creation, saying, *Who is worthy to open the book, and loose the seals thereof.* The result is, *No one in heaven, nor on earth, nor under the earth, is found able to open the book, nor to look therein.* All stand silent and aghast, as consciously insufficient for the arduous attempt. *I wept much,* says the apostle; *because none were found worthy to open and read the book, nor to look thereon.* At length he is comforted by one of the elders who saith to him, *Weep not: Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed to open the book, and loose its seven seals.* And immediately he beholds in the midst of the throne, *a Lamb as he had been slain; and he came and took the book out of the hand of Him who sat on the throne; and proceeds to open the seals one by one, and disclose their profound contents.*

Thus doth the scripture ascribe the certain foresight and prediction of future events to God only: And do not the common sense and experience of mankind subscribe to this decision?

Some future events, indeed, so depend on the known laws of nature, that whoever is acquainted with those laws, may be as certain that they will exist, as he is that the course of nature will continue the same. Of such events, however, the Spirit of prophecy pretends not to inform us; nor of any others, of which we may obtain a satisfactory knowledge by other means. It dwells chiefly on such events as immediately depend on the free actions of God, or of men, or of both conjointly. To foretell with certainty *such* events requires that we be perfectly acquainted with the secret purposes and designs of all those free agents, on whom those events depend. And where is the man on earth who dares profess this knowledge? Or if any could be so arrogant as to profess it, who would believe him?

Let the trial be made.--Here is a man who professes, from his own certain knowledge, without any information from heaven, to foretell future events. He tells a venerable man of an hundred years old, and his consort of ninety, who have lived together from their youth without issue, that they shall yet be fruitful; and within one year shall have a son, who shall be a father of many nations, and of many kings--that their posterity shall be numerous as the stars of heaven, and shall fall under oppressions for four hundred years in a strange land--that then God will interpose in a remarkable manner, destroy their oppressors, and bring them from under their hand with great riches;

dispossess seven powerful nations of a fertile country, and give it them for a possession; and that, two thousand years after, one shall be born of a branch of their posterity, who shall be a great blessing and benefactor, not only to his brethren, but to all nations of the earth. Can the smallest credit be given to such a prediction, in the circumstances suggested? All men will answer in the negative. Why?--Because all believe, that no man can know such events before they come to pass, but by revelation from HIM who knoweth all things. And tho angels are vastly superior to us in nature and knowledge; yet, to the foresight of *such* future events as depend on the free volitions of God, and, under Him, on other free agents, they are as incompetent as we, unless they were omniscient. For *who knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of man, which is in him? even so, and much more, the things of God knoweth no one, but the Spirit of God. But the Spirit revealeth all things, even the deep things of God.*

Doth any wish to remind us, that the ancient heathen nations had their oracles and diviners, who professed to foretel things to come; and that some of their predictions were justified by the event? Our answer is, It is true, they had them; but the spirit of prophecy claims no alliance with them. Divination is the counterfiet of prophecy, even as false signs and lying wonders are of true miracles. It seems to have begun with the defection of the sons of..

Noah from the true religion, and to have kept pace with it thro' all idolatrous nations, until the days of Christ. It was undoubtedly a device of Satan to defeat the design of true prophecy, and support false worship. It was also employed by the lordly tyrants of the gentile nations, as an engine of state, to procure a blind submission from their enslaved subjects. We find diviners in Egypt as early as the times of Joseph; tho' none of them was able to interpret the dream of Pharaoh.

Balak, the king of Moab, attempted in vain to employ divination against Israel, and expressed the high veneration in which he held it, when he said to Balaam, *I know that he whom thou blestest, is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.* At the same time, it was held in like veneration among the devoted nations of Canaan. For those nations, says Moses to Israel, *which thou shalt possess, bearkned unto observers of times, and unto diviners; but as for thee the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.*

But, as in many other instances, so particularly in this, *that which was highly esteemed among men, is an abomination to the Lord.* That holy omniscient Being, to whom all the deceit and wickedness of this infernal plot for the ruin of souls was naked and open, thus expresseth his mind to his people. *When thou comest into the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of these*

nations. There shall not be found among you any that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer; for all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord thy God; and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee--But, as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.

It is worthy of a particular notice, that it is in immediate connection with this, and in perfect contrast with the whole catalogue of impostors recited above, and to prevent the shadow of a plea for consulting or hearkening to any of them, that the promise of Christ, the great Prophet, is introduced, a mandate given out to all men to hearken to him, and an awful curse denounced on him who shall presume to speak a word in God's name, which He hath not commanded him to speak. See Deut. xviii. 9; 22.

Need we, then, wonder that the better informed among the heathen themselves exploded all pretensions to divination, as unworthy either of esteem or belief? Cicero, the celebrated Roman orator and philosopher, is an example. When in *one* book, and under a feigned character, he had collected what could be said in favour of divination; in *another* he confutes it all, and shows plainly that he had the whole affair in the utmost contempt. When urged with this plea in favour of diviners, that many of them often gave out true predictions, he replies,

“Will you then compell me to give my belief
 “to mere fables?—I will grant there is as much
 “amusement in them as you please: But cer-
 “tainly we ought not to give authority or faith
 “to mere fictions. And speaking of the divin-
 “ers of Mars and Apollo; “Nor do I think
 “them worthy of any credit. Part of their re-
 “sponses are manifest fictions, and a part are
 “uttered rashly at adventure. Nor were they
 “ever approved, (I say not, by any man of sa-
 “gacity; but) by any man of common sense.*

Supported by such authorities both divine and human, we hesitate not to affirm, that the responses given by the heathen oracles and diviners were no real prophecies; nor any thing better than mere human conjectures and abominable delusions. Nor could any thing have maintained their reputation so long, but the gross ignorance and superstition of the people, duped by the craft of their deceivers; who used to construct their predictions in so *artful* a manner, as to admit of an easy accommodation to the event, whatever it might be.

It is accordingly a notorious fact, that as

* At multi sæpe vera vaticinati. Num igitur me cogis etiam fabulis credere? quæ delectationis habeant quantum voles. Auctoritatem, quidem, nullam debemus nec fidem commentitiis rebus adjungere. Nec Martis vatibus, nec Appollinis opertis credendum existimo; quorum partim ficta aperte, partim effutitate, nunquam ne mediocri cuiquam, non modo prudenti probati sunt.—Cic. de divin. lib. II. sect. 113.

soon as the evangelical light had shined upon the benighted heathen, these birds of darkness were put to flight. The most renowned heathen temples were shut, and their oracles so effectually silenced, that they have not since dared to open their mouths; leaving it, as the indisputable prerogative of Jehovah, and those who are commissioned by him, to foresee and foretell future events.

On this ground it is farther observed; When any one, in the name of God, predicts a future event, and it comes to pass, if but in a single instance, it affords a strong presumption that he spake by divine inspiration. The proof would be perfect, were it not for the possibility that some wicked impostor may presume, in Gods name, to give out a bold conjecture, which, for the trial of his people, God may permit to be successful; as he permitted the magicians to imitate some of the miracles of Moses. But whenever the circumstances of the prediction and accomplishment are *such*, as to be evidently above all rational conjecture, or lucky contingency, nothing certainly can be a stronger proof of a person's acting by divine commission, and speaking by divine inspiration. The scripture considers it as such, when it expressly assigns it as the capital test of discrimination between a true and false prophet. For thus it is written, on the one hand, *When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the*

Lord hath not spoken ; but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously. And thus on the other hand ; The prophet who prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall it be known that the Lord hath truly sent him.

Now if the accomplishment of a prophecy, in but a single instance, may be so decisive a proof of divine inspiration, what shall we say, when the instances are next to innumerable of events most circumstantially foretold--Such events as at the time when they were foretold, were, to human view, the most unlikely ever to have come into existence, which yet were particularly foretold in one age, and most exactly fulfilled many ages after ? All this is so wonderfully true with regard to a multitude of scripture prophecies, that infidels themselves have unwittingly confessed it, when they have alledged, tho in direct opposition to the clearest evidence of the contrary, that they were written after the events.

Indulge me but a single remark more.--

The testimony arising from the Spirit of prophecy is most excellently adapted, even beyond that of miracles themselves, to confirm a *written standing revelation*. Miracles were the great proofs to those who saw them performed ; prophecies are the great proofs to those who see them fulfilled. Some of these latter were of things which shortly came to pass. By far the

greater part, and those of greatest importance, were of things not to come into event until after many days, or ages; in the latter days, or not until the time of the end. Accordingly *since* miracles have ceased, as well as *before*, prophecies have been fulfilling from age to age; and the more prophecies are fulfilled, the *more* and *more* confirmations we have of the truth of revelation.

In this, my brethren, we are singularly happy above even the prophets themselves; since what to *them* was only matter of *faith*, is *now* to *us* a matter of *fact* and of *sight*. *Blessed are our eyes, for they see the things which many prophets desired to see, but could not see them.*

Thus far we have considered the Spirit of prophecy as the testimony of God to his own word. We are now,

II. To observe the singular propriety with which it is called the *testimony of Jesus*.

Were we to understand the phrase as importing the testimony which Jesus *giveth*, we must confess in it a strict propriety. For in all the revelations which Jehovah hath made to men, the Messiah has been, in all ages, the great prophet. *This Lion of the tribe of Judah--this Lamb, who is in the midst of the living creatures, and of the elders, and he alone, of all in heaven, or in earth, or under the earth, is found worthy to take the book*

of prophecy out of the *band of him who sitteth on the throne*, to open its seals, and disclose the secrets therein written. And the communications of those secrets which he has been pleased to make, have been just what St John calls that which was made to him.--*The revelations of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants.* A part of those communications, both before and after his incarnation, he made immediately by himself; and a part by angelic and human prophets and apostles, who are therefore *fellow-servants and brethren*, as having the *testimony of Jesus*. These were his mouth, and *spoke only as the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify.*

Were we further to consider the *accomplishment* of prophecy as a part of the testimony, this also belongs to Christ as the great minister of providence, to whom is given, of the Father, all authority both in heaven and on earth.

But the text seems rather to speak of the Spirit of prophecy as the testimony which Jesus *receiveth*. Let us attend to it in this sense, as it respects the times both *before and after* his incarnation.

In all ages since the fall, Christ is the only Mediator. At no time could the hope of salvation for sinners be safely built on any other. In all times before his incarnation it was therefore necessary, that the faith and expectation

of mankind should be directed to his coming. Accordingly, until that period, it was the great office and end of the Spirit of prophecy to speak of him; *to testify before-hand the suffering of Christ, and the glory which should follow.*

What a transport of joy and wonder does it minister to the pious mind, to contemplate that compleat image of the great Son of righteousness, which before his rising had been reflected on the darkned world by the Spirit of prophecy!--To observe it beginning in a single trait or two, drawn by a single beam of light!--Then after the lapse of ages, receiving another, and another, until at length the outlines are formed!--And thence forward more rapidly filling up with one point of resemblance after another, as the dawn shone more and more toward the perfect day--Until at last the finished portrait has become a perfect likeness of the great original;--incapable of an application to any other Being in the universe of God, but to HIM, who is A CHILD BORN--A SON GIVEN, ON WHOSE SHOULDER IS THE GOVERNMENT--WHOSE NAME IS, WONDERFUL, COUNSELLOR, THE MIGHTY GOD, THE EVERLASTING FATHER, THE PRINCE OF PEACE!

Thus, my brethren, thus was the spirit of prophecy the testimony of Jesus before he came in the flesh. And since he is come, the punctual accomplishment in him of all the prophecies of the Messiah, hath pointed him out to

those who saw him, to us, and to all the world, as the **VERY ONE**, of whom *Moses in the law and the prophets did write*, **THE MESSIAH AND SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD.**

To this testimony among others, how often did Jesus appeal? *The son of man goeth, as it is written of him? Search the scriptures; for these are they which testify of me. This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. These are the words, which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me. And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them, in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself; and said, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise again the third day.*

To the same testimony did the apostles ever appeal in all their sermons and epistles; and especially when addressing the Jews, who acknowledged the prophetic writings.

And to the same testimony is the appeal now solemnly made, before the present generation, and all the world, for the proof that **JESUS IS THE CHRIST**; and that the religion which he taught is from heaven.

Only with attention let men compare the prophetic image with the great original; let them compare with candor and diligence, and

the proof is *invincible*--conviction *inevitable*--*satisfaction complet*. For what is the genuine history of Jesus, as delivered in the writings of the evangelists and apostles, but a perfect comment on the prophecies respecting the Messiah?--

Here, with joy, we recognize the promised *seed of the woman*, the *seed of Abraham*, of *Judah* and of *David*; and the great prophet like unto *Moses*, who should speak all the words of *Jehovah* :--The priest after the order of *Melchisedek*, who was to make his soul an offering for sin :--The anointed of the Lord, on whom his spirit rests, that he may preach to the meek, release the prisoner, and bind up the broken-hearted.

Here we admire the child to be born of a virgin--in the town of *Bethlehem*--to be called *IMMANUEL*; who was to grow up before the Lord as a tender plant, as a root out of a dry ground. With surprise we find him coming precisely at the time when the sceptre was departing from *Judah*--just before the latter temple was destroyed, and just at the end of the seventy weeks of *Daniel*. We confess in him the perfect plenitude of grace and wisdom, as anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows--full of the Spirit of wisdom, of counsel, of might, and the fear of the Lord, who should not strive nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets. We confess in him the peculiar works assigned by the spirit of prophecy to the Messiah, by whom the

eyes of the blind were to be opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped, the lame man to leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb to sing.

But we farther behold in Jesus, what was too strange to be believed before he came; what few or none ever believed, tho' it had been abundantly foretold, until by the event it was explained and sealed--We behold him *despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief.* He is sold for thirty pieces of silver--The shepherd is smitten, and the sheep are scattered--Tho' he had done no violence, he was taken as a prisoner to judgment--When oppressed and afflicted, he opened not his mouth--They pierce his hands & his feet--They gape upon him with their mouth, and wag their heads--He looketh for some to take pity, and there is none; for comforters, and he findeth none--In his thirst they gave him vinegar and gall to drink--He cries out in his agony, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!* He was numbered with the transgressors--He made his soul an offering--He was cut off from the land of the living--They parted his garments, and cast lots for his vesture.--Nevertheless, because he had done no violence, neither was deceit found in his mouth, he maketh his grave with the rich in his death. But God leaveth not his holy One among the dead--He says to him, *Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy foot-stool.* And behold, one like the Son of man, cometh in the clouds of heaven, and cometh to the Ancient of days, and

they bring him near before him ; and there is given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom ; that all people, nations and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom that which shall never be destroyed.

Such abundant proof results from the Spirit in the ancient prophets, that *Jesus is the Christ*. But no notice hath yet been taken of the accomplishment of *his own* predictions. So capital a branch of the argument must not be forgotten, tho' to do it justice would require a volume.

The Messiah was to be a great prophet. Jesus not only was the subject of prophecy, but was himself an illustrious prophet. The providence of God hath attested, and still attests him as *such*, by a punctual accomplishment of all his predictions,

How often did Jesus foretell his own death, with the manner and circumstances of it, just as they afterward happened, and are related by those who were witnesses of the whole transaction ?--That he should be delivered to the chief priests, and to the scribes; that they should condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles ;--that they should mock and scourge, and spit upon, and crucify him.--that he should be betrayed by Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve; that the rest should be offended that very night because of him ; and, notwithstanding their pro-

testations to the contrary, should forsake him and flee :--And, particularly, that Peter, who was more confident than the rest, before the cock crew twice, should deny him thrice.

Wonderful it is, that he uttered these predictions to the very persons who were to fulfil them, and with solemn and repeated admonitions to avoid the very crimes which he foretold they would commit. To Judas himself he beforehand denounced the doom, which should follow his treason; and to the rest repeated the admonitions, *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.* Had he not seen that in them, which none but God *could* see, surely he would either not have given out such predictions, or not have urged his disciples with such inducements to defeat them.--

Jesus foretold also his own resurrection, and that he would appear to his disciples in Galilee. Here is an instance which hath no parallel. What impostor would have dared to venture on such a prediction? Had Jesus been an impostor, the event would have detected him, and blasted all his designs. For however common it is for men once to die, a resurrection from the dead is confessedly the work of none but God; and such a work as, from his known truth and goodness, we have the utmost assurance he would never perform, to sanction a deceiver. But Jesus, knowing who he was, and whence he came, confidently gave out

his prediction, and rested the whole proof of his pretensions on the event. And evident it is, that his adversaries joined issue with him on this single point. For the morning after his crucifixion, they come to Pilate, saying; *Sir, we remember that that deceiver said while he was yet alive, after three days I will rise again; command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away; and so the last error shall be worse than the first.* Can any mortal conceive it possible for Deity himself to have given a more manifest decision in favour of Jesus, or a more demonstrative proof of all his pretensions, than he then gave, when, in exact agreement with his prediction, on the third day he *loosed the bands of death, and brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, and presented him alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, to be seen by his disciples for forty days, and to speak to them the things concerning the kingdom of heaven ?:-*

Jesus foretold to his apostles, that the holy Ghost should come upon them, and that they should receive power from on high to speak with new tongues, and work miracles. How wonderfully did this prediction begin to be accomplished on the feast of Pentecost, when they were filled with the holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, and immediately after to perform such mighty works as their Lord had done before them ?

He foretold the persecutions and sufferings

his apostles should undergo, and particularly the manner of that death by which Peter, in his old age, should glorify God; and that John should survive the destruction of Jerusalem.

He also foretold that his apostles should be his witnesses, not only in Judea, but to the uttermost parts of the earth: That the kingdom of heaven should be taken from the Jews, and given to the Gentiles, who should bring forth its fruits: That the number of his disciples should wonderfully increase from the smallest beginnings, as the seed groweth up to a large tree; and as a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump: And that his church should be so founded on a rock, that against it the gates of hell should not prevail.

It is well known how exactly these prophecies have been accomplished; the most of the things predicted in them, *when* predicted, were contrary to all human probability; impossible to be foreseen by human sagacity, or effected by human power. Especially that which relates to the wonderful progress of the gospel and church of Christ, from the smallest beginnings, by the weakest instruments, and notwithstanding all opposition. What events can be imagined more improbable, or with men more impossible, than that twelve peasants, destitute of all worldly advantages, without power, without riches, interest, policy, learning or eloquence, should propagate, and give prevalence to, a religion which disclaims all secular

motives, and that in opposition to the strongest prejudices, and reigning powers of Jews and Gentiles? yet such was the prediction of Jesus; and such the marvellous event!

I cannot dismiss this part of our subject, but with an earnest request to every hearer to observe the exact correspondence between our Lord's prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem, and that remarkable history, which so minutely records the events in which that prediction was accomplished. How minutely particular is the prediction? It notes the signs which were to precede, the circumstances which should attend and follow, that horrible devastation, and limits the time within which it should be made. What single circumstance of that prediction, minute as it is, may not be read in the history which relates that memorable event. We are at a loss which most to admire, the omniscience of the Saviour, or the providence of God in so exactly verifying his prediction. The interposition of providence is not less conspicuous in its care to preserve the evidence of the events, than in bringing to pass the events themselves. For the principal author, who has recorded those events, was a Jew, a priest, and an eye-witness, being present, and acting an important part in the scene which he describes; conversant alike with both Jews and Romans; and, in point of literature and information as well as integrity, the best furnished, perhaps, of any man of that age to give the account.--

In a word, as Vespasian and Titus were raised up and preserved to accomplish our Saviour's prediction; so was Josephus to exhibit to the world the evidence of that accomplishment. He was several times rescued from imminent destruction. His history, having been examined and approved by Vespasian and Titus, and other principal actors on both sides, was published, and has been transmitted to us intire.-- And tho' it is certain the author designed nothing *less*, yet if he had designed nothing *more*, his history could not have been a better comment on the prediction of Jesus, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. But had history been silent, the ruins of the city and temple, the desolation of Judea, and the dispersion of the Jews, which are still to be seen, would have testified to all men, as they now do, the signal accomplishment of that prediction.

What the design of Jesus was in all his prophecies we learn from his own words-- *Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.* Divine providence, in their completion, hath also a tongue, and a voice, which speaketh plainly. It is the voice of wisdom, which she putteth forth in the *chief place of the concourse*; *Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men.* Tho' it be a *still, small voice*, and for that reason little regarded by many; yet it is majestic and solemn as the rolling of the spheres, or as that which *breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.* What doth it speak? "I am

“Jehovah : I have confirmed the words of my
“messenger, that ye may know that I have
“sent Him.”--The very same which came from
the excellent glory ; *This is my beloved Son, in
whom I am well pleased.* HEAR YE HIM.

In view and review of all those things, must
not all men see and confess the singular pro-
priety with which the angelic witness pronoun-
ces, *The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophe-
cy ?*--Who can forbear to exclaim with St Tho-
mas, when he had seen in his master's hands
the prints of the nails, and was bidden to thrust
his hand into his side, MY LORD AND MY
GOD ?--

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S E R M O N L X V .

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

attested by the

SPIRIT OF PROPHECY.

BY

THEODORE HINSDALE, A. M.

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Revelation of St. John, xix. 10.

--I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren, who have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

HAVING made some remarks on the spirit of prophecy, and observed the singular propriety with which it is called the TESTIMONY OF JESUS; it remains,

III. That I more fully exhibit the evidence, by which the Spirit of prophecy proves to us the divine authority of the Christian religion.

In a remark already made, it has in effect been proved, that whenever God, in the events of his providence, fulfilleth a prophecy, which has been given out in his name, it is meant, on his part, and therefore to be received by us, as his testimony that the person who spake or

wrote the prediction, is commissioned by him as his prophet. The testimony therefore extendeth to all things spoken or written by that person in the name of God. It is of the nature of a royal seal, which stamps the commission of an ambassador; and hath the force of a command to all men, to give full evidence to all communications, which that person hath made, or shall make, in the name of his royal master. And this, in fact, is the style of God's commission to his prophet. *I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak all that I command him; and whosoever shall not hearken unto my word, which he shall speak, I will require it of him.*—Therefore, when we find in those sacred books, which have come to us in Gods name, and profess to reveal to us his whole mind, innumerable prophecies of things to come; and that a great number of these hath been, in ages past, exactly fulfilled, and others are at the present day fulfilling before our eyes, it certainly behoves us to consider these accomplishments as so many divine testimonies, that those writings are, what they claim to be, HIS OWN ORACLES; and that the religion, which they teach, IS FROM HEAVEN.

How mighty a confirmation, then, have the ancient prophetic writings received from the exact accomplishment of such a multitude of predictions in Jesus Christ? In a review of what was said relative to this point under the preceding head of discourse, with what grow-

ing assurance may we say, in the words of St. Peter, *We have the word of prophecy more sure.*

And while, with such irresistible force of evidence, the spirit of prophecy hath proved Jesus to be the Messiah, by the accomplishment, both of all those *ancient* prophecies and *his own*, it just as forcibly confirms whatsoever he taught in the days of his flesh, and therefore all the leading principles of that religion which bears his name, and rests on him as its foundation.

From Jesus thus sealed by the holy Father as the great prophet, THE FAITHFUL AND TRUE WITNESS, arises a new and additional confirmation of the books of *both testaments*: Of *the former*, by his repeated appeals to them as the oracles of God; and of *the latter*, from his express appointment of his apostles to be his witnesses to the world, and his promise to them, for that purpose, of the unerring guidance of his Spirit.

Here let it be remembered, that the apostles and evangelists, who were employed to write the books of the new testament, beside their other supernatural powers, were most, if not all of them, endued with the gift of prophecy; and particularly, four of them, viz St. Paul, John, Peter, and Jude, who wrote all the books of the new testament, except

five, have left on record prophecies of their own, which have received, or are *now* receiving, their accomplishment. Thus these sacred writers, and the books which bear their names, in addition to all the other proofs of their divine authority, are sealed by the testimony of Jesus.--

In the mean time, each testament has received a continual and growing confirmation, from the accomplishment of a vast multitude of prophecies respecting other things in the condition of the church and of the world.

Here opens an unbounded field, on which at present want of time forbids to enter. Permit me, my brethren, only to remind you of a prophetic scene opened in each testament; the one, two thousand five hundred years ago by Daniel in the dream of the king of Babylon, and repeated in the vision of the beasts; the other, one thousand seven hundred years ago by St. John in his Revelation. Each in a different manner, but both in perfect agreement, exhibit not a single event--not the events of an age--but an orderly and accurate epitome of the history of the church and world, from its own time to the present, and from the present to the consummation of all things. Let these prophetic scenes be examined by all the light of divine and human history. The more you will examine and compare, the more you will believe and wonder.

The past ages of these prophecies are not buried in darkness, like those which went before them. "Their events are the subject," as one* well observes, "of the most celebrated pens, both of former and latter ages. These histories are the best written and the most read of any. They are the study of the learned, and the amusement of the polite. We learn them when young, and forget them not when we are old, while very little is known of other times and nations."

We cannot lay too much stress on the argument from the accomplishment of prophecy.-- It is impossible we should be misled by it, unless we will put out our own eyes. Prophecy is like the rod of Moses: It works wonders to prove and establish the true religion; but devours all impostors which come in its way. In the hand of a true prophet it is the rod of God, which smiteth the rock, and bringeth forth the waters of life. But a pretence to it in the hand of an impostor (and a pretence is all an impostor can have) is a sword; and he *who taketh the sword, shall perish with the sword.*

We have observed the fate of the pretenders to prophecy among the ancient heathen.-- How they melted away at the presence of the sun of righteousness, the great prophet. Since that day no prudent impostor has dared to take up this sword. Among nations wholly unen-

*Newton on Prophecy.

lightened and savage, some may, perhaps, be found, who pretend to prophecy. Among Christian nations a few wild fanatics have given out predictions; but the event hath uniformly blown them up, and exposed their delusions. But which of the more crafty and projecting impostors has dared to risk his reputation, and his cause, on the event of a prediction?--Mahomet indeed called himself a prophet; but we do not find that he ventured on prophecy. The roman pontiffs, thro' a long succession of ages, have been grasping at every advantage, which the most profound policy could suggest, to give credit, prevalence and permanence to their corruptions. But when have they pretended to the spirit of prophecy? They have long pretended to miracles, and made the power of working them one mark of their church. Mahomet pretended to have wrought several. It is comparatively easy to obtain credit to such pretences. But what reason can be given that they have not claimed the gift of prophecy? Is it not this, and only this? they could not find how they could get any advantage by it, and they durst not run the risk of that detection and destruction, which must have been the certain consequence of events not answering their predictions.

I therefore repeat it, there is no danger of being misled by our argument, by daylight, and with our eyes open. Mere pretences to prophecy can never obtain credit but in the

dark.--The true spirit of prophecy loves the light. The more you will put it to the test by the light, the more you will admire and adore him, who *revealeth the deep and secret things*; and the more readily believe in your heart, and confess with your mouth, that the *prophecy came not of old time by the will of man; but holy men spake as they were moved by the holy Ghost*.

But why so confident?--Some cannot bear the light. It stares them too strongly in the face. They turn their backs, and complain, "The correspondence between the predictions and events is so perfect, that the predictions must have been forged, and written after the events."

To such distress is infidelity reduced. Here is the last refuge of a desperate cause.--For in this very plea there is a confession, which, if the plea fail, must confound the cause forever.

May we be permitted to ask these objectors, Where? when? by whom were those predictions forged? Ye cannot, ye pretend not to tell. Why then is it alledged? Because it seemeth to you incredible, that events should be so accurately described before they exist. Is it then incredible that divine omniscience should describe events *to come* as perfectly, as human history can events which *have come* to pass? Ye must recede from the objection, or believe nothing but what ye see with your own eyes

For the books which contain these prophecies are now in the hands of millions in two quarters of the globe. All of them have been read in public weekly assemblies for seventeen hundred, and most of them for more than two thousand years. They have been translated into many languages, and dispersed into many countries. They have been quoted and commented upon by writers ancient and modern; by Jewish, Christian and infidel authors, whose books, or sacraments have come down to our times. Yet will ye pretend they have been forged and imposed upon the world by a fraud!

Those who have written against revelation affect the honour of knowing more, and seeing farther, than others. But doth it not betray an ignorance altogether unworthy of a liberal mind, and a free inquiry, to assert things without the shadow of a proof? Doth it not bespeak something even worse than ignorance, to assert and adhere to assertions, which are confronted by the united voice of all ancient history sacred and profane?

But since you have so little faith in ancient history, what if the appeal be made to your senses?--To the present condition of the world, and to monuments and events so recent as to preclude a possibility that the prophecies, which are fulfilled in them, should have been written after the events? The appeal hath been made

in the face of the world, and by an able pen* your objection has been fairly taken up by the roots; and the cause of infidelity left without a cloak to cover its weakness.

Be pleased to open your eyes, and observe how exactly the late and present condition of the descendants of Noah answers their destiny pronounced by him. Behold the sons of Japhet *enlarged*, and ruling in Europe and America; and, ever since the calling of the Gentiles, *dwelling in the tents of Shem*; while the curse of slavery to this day rests on the *posterity of Ham*.

Take notice of the wandering Arabians--See how the destiny of the sons of Ishmael, foretold by an angel, is answered in them. Have they not been *multiplied exceedingly, and become a great nation*? Is not their *band against every man, and every mans band against them*? And yet, to the just astonishment of all the world, after all the mighty attempts which have been made to crush them as common enemies of mankind, do they not still dwell as a free people in the *presence of all their brethren*?

Of Amalek it was said by Moses, *His remembrance shall utterly be put out from under heaven*; and of the house of Esau, by another prophet, that it should be *cut off forever*. And where do you find on earth a single descendant of either

of those stocks, though once such great nations ? But you see the sons of Jacob existing at the present day, precisely in that condition which by all the prophets, was predicted of them. Behold ! how they are punished for rejecting their great prophet--*Scattered among the heathen, among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other ! oppressed and spoiled evermore--made a proverb, and a by-word, and an astonishment among the nations ;* while those, who at one time and another have been their enemies and conquerors, have long since been brought to their destined ruin.

Where are now those renowned cities, Nineveh, Babylon and Tyre, whose desolation was so often denounced by the prophets ? What is now the condition of Jerusalem and Judea ? Are they not *trodden down of the Gentiles*, and likely to be still trodden down, until the *times that the Gentiles shall be fullfilled* ? How remarkably do the actions and state of the Turks, who have so long trodden them down, agree to what was predicted of them ? *He shall come with horsemen and many ships, and shall overflow and pass over. He shall enter into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown.* Do ye not find it even so ? And that he hath stretched out his hand over the land of Egypt, with the *Lybians at his steps*, while the *Arabians* still *escape out of his hand*.

Hath not the state of Egypt, for many past ages, been just as was foretold ?--a *base* and the

basest of kingdoms, without a ruler of her own, and wasted by strangers.

Observe the fourth kingdom of Daniel's vision broken into ten. Behold, that wonderful power, *diverse from the first*, which hath arisen up among them, with a look more stout than his fellows, and a mouth speaking great things, even great words against the Most-High--That power, which wear-eth out the saints of the Most-High, and changeth times and laws. Behold him casting down the truth to the ground; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats. Yea, behold him sitting in the temple, the church of God, and shewing himself that he is God; whole coming is with signs and lying wonders. And remember, that the seat of this horrid tyrannical power is *that great city, which standeth on seven mountains, and which, in the days of the prophecy, reigned over all the kings of the earth.* In fine,

You see the church of God at this day subsisting in the world.--The same church, which before Christ was continued in the seed of Abraham; and which, at, and after his coming, took that new form, which Daniel saw under the name of the KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, and hath ever since subsisted amongst the Gentiles. You know the preservation and final prevalence of this society, together with the hostile attempts and final ruin of all her enemies, have been predicted by all the prophets from Moses to St. John. Now when ye see *this very church* in pre-

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sent existence and enlargement, after all the attempts which have been made, in all manner of ways, and thro' a long succession of ages, for her destruction; and notwithstanding she has all the seeds of dissolution in herself, has often been extremely feeble, and in the hand of her enemies, and at the point of death.--When you see this, you behold an event, which, tho' perfectly corresponding to hundreds of scripture-prophecies and promises, is yet UNPARALLELED IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD. Suffer me to repeat, IT IS UNPARALLELED IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD--The most unlikely event when it was foretold, ever to have existed;--and which, indeed, *never could have existed, but by the marvellous providence of God, defeating the influence of natural causes*, that he might fulfil the designs of his mercy;--that he might *confirm the words of his servants, and perform the counsel of his messengers*; and at the same time, that he might *frustrate the tokens of the liars; and make diviners mad*, and close the mouth of infidels in PERPETUAL SILENCE. Thus is the Spirit of prophecy the testimony of Jehovah to the sacred scriptures as HIS OWN ORACLES, and to Jesus as the Christ; and of consequence, to the Christian religion as DIVINE.

And what, my brethren, is the conclusion of the whole? Is it not plainly this? That the religion of the bible, which teacheth all men to believe, love, obey and worship the *one true God; through the one Mediator, the man Christ Jesus, is the only true religion*?--That the works and

sufferings assigned to the Messiah on earth are finished?--That when the gospel, which bringeth the glad tidings, and calleth us and all men to repent, believe, obey and be saved, shall have finished its course, the same Jesus, whom God the Father hath thus sealed, and received up to glory, shall come again, to raise the dead and change the living, and render to both according to their works? In the mean time, that we and all men are candidates for the immortal honors and rewards of the heavenly kingdom, or the never-ending sorrows of damnation, according as we *now* obey or disobey that awful mandate, which once came from the excellent glory, HEAR YE HIM. Should not the unshaken truth, importance and excellency of this religion animate the ministers of Christ, not only firmly to believe and practise it themselves; but with unwearied diligence and constancy to publish it to the world? Supported by *such* evidence, what reason have they to tremble before unbelievers, or to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ? Let us not be at all dismayed or discouraged, that there are so many who believe not our report. So surely as Jesus is the Christ, his gospel will finally triumph over all infidelity. And is it not a glory worthy our highest ambition, to contribute all we can, tho' it were but a mite, to advance *such* a triumph? We are ready to say, we labour in vain; yet, if we labour faithfully, let us remember, *Our work is with the Lord; and in due time we shall reap, if we faint not.*

Let all who have believed the testimony of Jesus, and built all their hope of salvation on the foundation of the apostles & prophets, rejoice in the consolation which may be taken from the preceding discourse. Be assured, O ye believers, *This is the true grace of God in which you stand.* Ye are building on a rock, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. Only walk worthy of the gospel, and add to your faith those other most excellent virtues which it recommends, and you shall never fall; for so *an entrance shall be ministred to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*--

Have any to this time neglected to examine the evidences of the Christian religion? Have any founded their faith on tradition? Hath the belief of any been staggered by the cavils of infidelity? They are now most earnestly invited to attend with care and candor to the argument, which hath just been exhibited. And not to that only, but to that in its due connection with all the rest. For tho' this by itself is conclusive and unanswerable, it is still but *one* of a *cloud* of witnesses, which *all* give in their united testimony, to authenticate the religion of Jesus.

Be intreated then to examine them with care. It is a matter of infinite and everlasting importance to you, as well as others. If Jesus be the Christ, if the gospel be from God, you are

happy or wretched forever according as you embrace or reject its most gracious offers. For such are the decisive words of Christ himself, which his ministers may not suppress; *He that believeth shall be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be damned.*

But let none rest in a cold assent. *That* faith only will save the soul, which embraceth Christ as a whole Saviour, and the gospel truth in the love of it: *That* faith which transformeth the soul into the image of Christ, and reduceth the life into a real conformity to his commandments.

Finally, my brethren, have we seen the scriptures sealed by past events? Let it exalt our faith into a full assurance, that all the prophecies which remain, and particularly those which speak of Jesus' future glory, shall receive, in due time, their perfect accomplishment.

With joy we behold Christ reigning, while with grief we observe it is as yet in the *midst of his enemies*. As yet he finds but little faith on earth. Among even those who call him Lord, how many believe not? The gloomy shades of heathenish darkness overspread many nations. The imposture of Mahomet still stretcheth out its cruel hand over many countries. The Jews abide still in their unbelief. The man of sin is still in power. The witnesses yet prophecy in sackcloth.

But blessed be God, he hath opened to our faith brighter prospects, and a more glorious order of things. When infidelity and discord, among those who are called by his name, shall cease, then there shall be *one Lord, and his name one*; and he will give to them *one heart and one way, that they may fear Him forever*,--when idol gods shall perish from the earth, and from under the heavens.--when the king of the north, who hath planted his tabernacle in the glorious holy mountain, shall come to his end, and none shall help him.--when the Lord shall consume that wicked One with the Spirit of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming--when the vail shall be taken from the hearts of the Jews, and they shall return unto the Lord. Then shall commence the GLORIOUS ERA, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the Lord's; and be given to the saints of the Most High, and they shall live and reign with Christ a thousand years.

This GRAND ERA is approaching with a speed rapid as the flight of time. *The night is far spent, the day is at hand.* In this prospect, with what ardor should we pray, *THY KINGDOM COME?* And tho' we may not live to see that glorious day of the Son of Man upon earth, God will hasten his work. And if we shall die watching and praying for the coming of the Lord, we shall be found of him in peace at last, and have a part in the perfect light, perfect love and consummate joys of heaven; with which the present world, in its very best estate, is not worthy to

be compared. For if we believe that Jesus died and arose, even so them also who sleep in Jesus, God will bring with him. Nor shall those who live and remain until the coming of the Lord, prevent those who are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then shall those, who are alive and remain, be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore, my brethren, let us comfort one another with these words.

S E R M O N L X V I .

THE EFFICACY OF THE GOSPEL
ABOVE ALL WORLDLY WISDOM.

BY

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I Cor. i. 21.

For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

By the preaching of the apostle Paul, a famous church had been formed at Corinth, one of the most flourishing cities of ancient Greece, very conveniently situated for trade, and even vying with Athens in arts and learning. That church was abundantly furnished with the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and enriched with the graces of Christianity; but was soon divided into parties, by paying more regard to the different gifts of those who had preached among them, than to the plain, essential doctrines and duties of the gospel. In this

respect they retained too much of the spirit of their philosophers, who made themselves heads of different sects, and led their disciples, ranged into distinct parties, to carry on continual disputes and contentions against each other. This was far from being agreeable to the design and spirit of the gospel; which plainly taught them to trust in one only Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ, learn his holy doctrines, do whatever he has commanded, and love one another as brethren of the same family. Nor had Paul given them the least occasion of breaking into parties: For he had not called them to look to him as their saviour, nor baptized them, as his disciples, in his own name: Nay, so far was he from discovering any such design, that he had considered it as a matter of little importance, compared with his great work of preaching the gospel, whether he baptized converts with his own hands, or left this to be done by the evangelists who accompanied him in his travels; and it gave him no small satisfaction, considering the present disposition of the Corinthians, to reflect that he himself had baptized but two single persons and one household of that whole church. And as to his preaching, they had much less reason to suppose he was aiming to gain applause, and form a party for himself, like their celebrated philosophers: For his preaching was not affectedly embellished with the enticing charms of eloquence, or recommended by a show of deep learning and curious reasoning, which would have been inconsistent with the efficacy

of the plain doctrine of a crucified Saviour ; but, directly contrary to the well known manner of philosophers and the prevailing taste of the world, he had with the greatest simplicity preached the *cross of Christ*, tho' it appeared to the wise men of the world the most foolish method which could be taken to gain profelytes, and teach men religion and virtue. Here therefore the apostle begins to triumph over the wisdom of the world, with an evident allusion to those remarkable words of Isaiah ; *Behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work & a wonder ! for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.--Thine heart shall meditate terror : Where is the scribe ? where is the receiver ? where is he that counted the towers ?* From these texts the apostle borrows his exultation over all that wisdom which the Greeks admired and were seeking after ; and thus exclaims, *Where is the wise ? where is the scribe ? where is the disputer of this world ? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world ?* Immediately after this our text follows, to justify the exultation. For the apostle affirms it to be a surprizing evidence of the wisdom of the divine government, that God permitted the world first of all to try the utmost force of their own wisdom, in order to find the knowledge of the true God, and the way to happiness ; and when, after a complete experiment, their continual efforts failed of those important ends, that he himself took a method quite different from all the

vain reasonings of philosophers, and which they treated with the greatest contempt, as foolishness, to enlighten, reform and save mankind; viz, by the preaching of Christ crucified.

Therefore, my present design is to give some particular illustration of the sentiments contained in the text, by endeavouring to shew,

I. That the wisdom of God was conspicuously manifested in permitting the world, for many ages before the gospel, to seek the knowledge of himself and the way to happiness, by trying the utmost strength of human wisdom; the result of which experiment was, that mankind were never able, in this way, to gain the true knowledge of God, or save themselves from the destructive power of sin.

II. That the method which God was pleased afterward to take, tho' quite different from that wisdom which the world still admires, and is inclined to seek after, and which appears in their view *foolishness*, is a most glorious display of his wisdom, and most effectual to answer the important purposes of bringing men to the knowledge of himself, delivering them from the power of sin, and making them forever happy; viz, by this public universal proclamation,--That Christ crucified was the Son of God and the Saviour of mankind; and that the belief of this proclamation is the principal thing necessary in order to our being saved. Here I have taken

the liberty to substitute the word *proclamation* instead of *preaching*; because the latter is too weak to express the full force of the original word κηρυγματος, which properly signifies that which is published by the voice of a crier, or in other words, the proclamation made,

I. I am to shew, that the wisdom of God was conspicuously manifested in permitting the world, for many ages before the gospel, to seek the knowledge of himself and the way to happiness, by trying the utmost strength of human wisdom; the result of which experiment was, that mankind were never able, in this way, to gain the knowledge of the true God, or save themselves from the destructive power of sin. A similar experiment had been made long before by king Solomon, under divine direction, with all the advantages of wisdom, riches and honor, whether man could find any good which might give him full satisfaction in the present world; and, to save all others the trouble and disappointment of trying the same experiment under far inferior advantages, he gave his full testimony that all things under the sun are vanity. And knowing how much men were inclined to think their own wisdom sufficient to teach them all things relating to religion and good morals, without any revelation from heaven, God saw it best to have an experiment made in this respect also, before he sent his Son to be the light of the world; and when the gospel came, it most evidently appeared that such a

revelation was absolutely necessary for the world.

But it has been made an objection against divine revelation, that if it is so necessary and important to the world, it is unaccountable that it should be so long confined to one nation, or the perfection of it postponed for so many ages, while all the nations were left in ignorance; that it ought to have been made known, in the most complete manner, from the earliest ages, published universally, and, by the special providence of God, continued every where, and thro' all generations.

To this objection it is a sufficient answer, That the divine government cannot be directed by human reason. For men are not competent judges of the best order of the universe, or the most proper methods of bringing moral agents, when blinded and vitiated, to the right exercise of their rational powers, and due subjection to the laws of their Maker. An infinite mind has an unlimited view of all things at once, sees all causes and effects, and can determine, without the least error, what rules of proceeding are most suitable to make his wisdom, power, justice, goodness and mercy known to men, and all intelligent beings: Nor does he govern moral agents in an arbitrary, despotic manner. Therefore, when we are sure that he has really proceeded in this or that way in his moral government, we ought to be fully

satisfied that it is right, because God hath done it, whatever objections might otherwise arise in our minds. We may be ready to imagine the infinite goodness of God would have led him to place man at first in an immutable state of wisdom, innocence and happiness; but we have most melancholly proof that it was not so. We might as well suppose man ought to have been made with greater perfection in all his powers, and continued forever infallible in his reasonings, and secure from all error in conduct. Or let our proud fancies have full scope, and we may wonder man was not made with higher powers, and had not equal rank with angels in the scale of beings. But we know that God made him to fill his proper place in creation; that he was made upright, furnished with sufficient capacities to secure his own happiness; but liable, as a free agent, to misimprove the favours of heaven; and that all the folly and misery to which he is subjected, must be attributed to his own disregard to his Creator's will. Men may think they reason well from the benevolence of the Deity, especially since the first promise of a Saviour, when they conclude his design was to make every individual of mankind happy, without proposing any farther conditions; but the revelation of mercy in the gospel plainly limits it to such as hearken to this revelation, believe it, and comply with the design of it by turning from sin to righteousness. And since the reasoning faculties of man fall so far short of those attainments in knowledge and good morals,

which seem to be most suitable to our nature, and conducive to our happiness, some may think it hardly reconcileable with the idea of the infinite goodness of God, that the greater part of mankind should be left, thro' a long succession of ages, in such gross ignorance and barbarity as degrades them almost to the rank of sagacious brute animals. The great God, acting in a sovereign manner, according to his own goodness and boundless power, without regard to any rules of wisdom in his government, might have given equal strength of mind to every individual of mankind, and equal advantages of improvement. He might, from the very first, have taught them the whole extent of science, and all the arts and accommodations of social and civil life, and opened to their view every thing relating to the glory and felicity of the world to come. But God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as ours. He governs the universe, not by constant immediate exertions of power; but by certain laws or rules of proceeding which his wisdom hath established, all suited to the natures and situations of the variety of creatures; and by these laws all things go on in constant order, and his vast designs in the creation are accomplished. Just so in the government of the moral world, God proceeds by certain rules of wisdom, adapted to the powers and situations of rational beings, so that they may be led to the proper exercise of their own faculties, while he richly bestows on them the blessings of his goodness and grace. He

does not lavish on men special favours, while they are quite insensible of their value ; but requires them to know their own wants, that they may joyfully and thankfully receive the tokens of his goodness and mercy.

God suffered ignorance, idolatry and wickedness to prevail for many ages in the world, that *the effects of man's apostacy might become most apparent*, and that all might see and feel the necessity of some remedy for such universal corruption and misery. As all manner of vice prevailed more and more without bounds, to the disgrace of human nature, and the great detriment of society, the few who remained more virtuous than the rest, at length began to see the necessity of giving some check to the licentious reign of immorality, and cultivating the principles of natural religion and virtue. This induced their wise men to bend their studies this way ; to enquire into the great difference between virtue and vice as to the happiness of man ; to form systems of morality according to their various views, defend them by learned arguments, and endeavour with great zeal to make proselytes to their sentiments. Thus moral philosophy began in Greece seven or eight hundred years before the coming of Christ :--and it grew more and more into esteem. It was the favorite study and unwearied labor of the most learned men ; and they wrote many things admirably well. But their systems were very different, and often quite contradictory to each other :

Each contended for his own hypothesis, and disputed against all the rest : Each boasted of his own wisdom, and the number of his followers. But after all their great labors and improvements, their wisdom had very little effect on the bulk of the people, to reclaim them from endless superstitions and vices. Nay, idolatry and vice prevailed more and more as learning increased, and rose to the greatest height among the multitude when human wisdom gained its summit.

The antient philosophers, after all their enquiries, were never able to discover and represent clearly the unity, the spirituality, and the essential characters of the eternal God, free from all unworthy conceptions of him ; to point out that pure and rational worship which his nature requires, without mixture of superstition ; to assure men that forgiveness of sins is consistent with his moral government ; and give full evidence of the rewards of virtue and the punishment of vice in a future state of existence. By their utmost wisdom they were never able to dispossess their temples of the innumerable gods worshipped by the vulgar, nor free their own minds from the prevailing superstitions. They reasoned well on the principal branches of virtue ; but they did not teach pure and perfect morality. In their systems they allowed the practice of some great vices, and countenanced them in others by their own conduct ; and notwithstanding their reasonings in favour of vir-

tue, very few among the multitude were persuaded to comply with their labored instructions.

By the law naturally impressed on their minds, men are conscious of the good or evil of their actions, at least as far as relates to the present life. They know it is criminal to steal; abuse one another, commit adultery or murder, or counteract any of the laws and rules without which men cannot live safely and comfortably in society and neighbourhood. They are ready to complain of injuries which they receive, and in their resentments charge one another with many faults; and in their more sober tho'ts they have a general view of the principal branches of social virtue. They have also some apprehensions of the anger of God, or the gods whom they worship, for the offences which they commit, and the necessity of appeasing them by such offerings and rites of worship as they imagine most acceptable. But their passions and appetites, lusts and evil habits, prove too strong for reason and conscience, and still prompt them on to all kinds of wickedness. When men have contracted strong habits of vice, all attempts to persuade them out of their course by the most learned reasonings will be in vain. You may urge, with unwearied address, the beauty of virtue, and the deformity of vice; the high satisfaction in doing well, and the painful reflections on immoral conduct; the advantages of honesty, sobriety, chastity &c, and the

many inconveniences, sorrows and sufferings, which men bring on themselves by going on in vicious courses; but you will not prevail with men, captivated by their own lusts, by mere reasonings, to renounce their way of life, and act contrary to those strong inclinations which afford them the highest pleasure. There must be something to strike the mind with force superior to the violence of the passions and sensual inclinations, before men will hearken to the still voice of reason and conscience, and forsake the ways of sin. There must be some powerful alarm to the mind; some extraordinary terrors displayed in full view; some glorious hopes and prospects presented; some wonderful news communicated, which will rouse the attention, and affect all the powers of the soul. Thus the carnal and sensual images may be overpowered, which continually haunt the mind, and hold the government of all the nobler faculties. But such methods are beyond the sphere of mere philosophy.

Now was it not a wonderful evidence of the wisdom of God, that he should permit this great experiment to be made, Whether human wisdom could recover a world of rational beings from a most unhappy state of ignorance and alienation from God, to the knowledge of him, and a conduct suitable to the dignity of man's nature, and necessary for his happiness? If no such experiment had been made before the gospel was published, the wise men of the world

would not easily have been persuaded, but that reason and learning might have been effectual, without such a revelation from heaven to enlighten and reform mankind. To this very day many are glorying in the sufficiency of reason alone for all the purposes of religion and morality, carry on the experiment still, and reject revelation as quite unnecessary. But after all the trials which they have been repeatedly making, with many improvements on the antient philosophy, borrowed from that very revelation which they despise, they cannot yet agree among themselves in their several systems of infidelity, and have had no better success in reforming the world than their heathen predecessors. The force of the most rational arguments, and all the charms of eloquence were tried for many ages, and human nature must have been pronounced irrecoverable from it's inveterate disorders, if God had not taken the work into his own hands, and in an extraordinary way, adapted to the state of mankind, shewn his power by the proclamation of a Saviour. What this method is, so efficacious above all human wisdom, is the second thing which our text calls us to consider.

II. The method which God has been pleased to take, tho' quite different from that wisdom which the world still admires, and is inclined to seek after, and which in their view appears foolishness, is a most glorious display of his wisdom, and most effectual to answer the great purposes

of bringing men to the knowledge of himself, delivering them from the power of sin, and making them forever happy, viz,—By this public universal proclamation, “That Christ crucified is the Son of God, and the Savior of mankind; and that the belief of this proclamation is the principal thing necessary in order to our eternal salvation.”

I have observed, that in order to overcome the power which sin has over mankind, there must be *something to rouse and alarm the mind; some extraordinary terrors displayed; some glorious hopes presented to view; some wonderful news communicated*, sufficient to overpower the carnal and sensual images which continually haunt the mind, and hold the government of the nobler faculties.

Now this very method God in his infinite wisdom has taken, to conquer the souls of sinners, and bring them under his righteous government. After all the learning of the world had been employed, with all possible advantages, to reason mankind out of the practice of vice, and teach them virtue and pure religion, without any great effect; God took the work into his own hands, and, in a way which human wisdom could never have thought of, awakened the attention of mankind, presented things spiritual and eternal in the clearest view, tending to fill their minds with wonder, terror, hope and joy. And this was by sending out a proclamati-

on through the world.--That Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified by the Jews, was his own Son, and the appointed Saviour of the world; that he rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and will appear again with divine glory and majesty at the end of the world, to judge all mankind, receive the righteous into heavenly glory, and punish all wicked men in flames of eternal fire.

The proclamation consisted of one principal fact, viz, That Jesus, who suffered on the cross, was risen from the grave, and gone up into heaven. For if this fact was true, then the whole character which Christ assumed was true, as attested by many astonishing miracles; his doctrines were from God, and to be received with full credit; his commands are to be obeyed with entire subjection to his authority; and the exceeding great & precious promises which he has made will most certainly be performed.

Nothing could appear more foolish to the wise men of the world, than to hear of a number of illiterate persons going every where to reform mankind, only by publishing a proclamation of a certain fact; a fact which they imagined in itself to be very incredible, and which they did not consider in all its connections; a fact accompanied with the most shameful circumstances, however extraordinary. To proclaim a man who had been accused, tried, condemned and crucified as a notorious malefactor,

to be a saviour for mankind, when he could not save himself; to declare him to have risen from the grave by his own power, when he appeared to be but a man, and that of the lowest rank and character; and to depend on this proclamation to oppose the current opinions and practices of the world, appeared to philosophers superlative folly. What they expected from men setting out to be great instructors of the world, was, profound learning, a labored investigation of truth and morals, fine drawn arguments and ingenious deductions, which might entertain highly cultivated minds, and lay the foundation for new improvements in theoretic wisdom. But to see poor illiterate fishermen going about every where only to publish this strange story, That a criminal, whom the Jews crucified, rose again after he was dead, was in their view most ridiculous; nor could they conceive what great and good effect it could have on mankind. But notwithstanding the contemptuous opinion which the philosophers entertained of the proclamation of a crucified Saviour, it was most effectual to the great purposes of bringing men to the knowledge of the true God, delivering them from their sins, and making them forever happy.

Let us consider this proclamation in connexion with the characters which Christ claimed, when he preached and wrought miracles among the Jews, and the doctrines he taught. What could be more wonderful and alarming? What

greater news could be brought to men, than that the Son of God, by whom he made the world, came down from the Father in an human form, was a partner in our flesh and blood, conversed familiarly with men, declared his Father's will, and died for the salvation of sinners? What can be more alarming or encouraging than to know, that he came to warn sinners to escape from the wrath to come on all the ungodly at the end of the world; to call all men every where to repent, return to God, and live a sober, righteous and godly life according to his Father's will; to assure them, that God is full of compassion and gracious, willing to forgive all the trespasses of repenting sinners, and receive them fully into favour as children of his family; and that he will supply all their necessities while in this world, support them under every affliction, comfort them with his presence when they walk thro' the dark shades of death, raise them at the last day from the grave, and bring them into a new and glorious world of everlasting light, joy and felicity? That man must be very much unacquainted with himself and with human nature, who does not know that a messenger, sent from heaven in the open view of the world on such an important errand, would arrest the attention of all mankind, and have a surprizing effect on every faculty of the soul. If, in the midst of the greatest corruptions of the world, some angel should make his appearance in the upper regions, clothed with all the radiance of an heavenly spi-

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rit, and visible every where; and, with a voice like thunder, should proclaim the anger of the great God against all wicked men, assure them that the most awful destruction from the Almighty is coming speedily upon them, exhort them to repentance, promise them divine mercy, teach them that obedience which God requires, inform them of all the glory of the heavenly world from which he came, and that all good men shall be admitted there, when the earth and all the works therein shall be burnt up, and the wicked cast into the lake of fire: Would this surprizing appearance have no more effect than calm reasoning on the same truths? Surely all the senses would be struck with awe and amazement, as well as man's rational nature wrought upon; and we might expect some remarkable change in the sentiments and morals of mankind.

But the gospel contains something far more wonderful, tho' not so evident and alarming to the senses, viz, That the eternal invisible God was manifested in our fleshly natures, in the person of one who is superior to all the angels of heaven, and declared to be *the only begotten and beloved Son* of the Father--That he is the same person, whose voice was heard in the beginning of the creation commanding all things into existence, who is the *image of the invisible God*, in whom *the brightness of his glory shines*; who was *born before every creature*; *by whom and for whom all things were created, that are in heaven, and that*

are in the earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; who is before all things, and by whom all things consist. So Paul gives the glorious character of Jesus Christ in the first chapter of his epistle to the Colossians, and again farther illustrates it in the beginning of his epistle to the Hebrews: And the beginning of John's gospel gives the same high character, which may be much better understood by the plain language of the inspired writings, than by any metaphysical jargon of some antient creeds, or of more modern scholastic divines. The gospel declares, that this wonderful person *was made flesh*, and in human nature familiarly conversed with men, *preached righteousness* in the most perfect view of his Father's law and government, testified against the evil works of the world, called all men *every where to repent*, and *saith that God who is able, not only to kill the body, but to destroy both soul and body in hell.* He made a full revelation of the future *resurrection of the dead*, the great solemnities of the *day of judgment*, when he himself will sit as judge in his Father's glory, the happiness which the righteous will then obtain in the heavenly world, and the dreadful sentence which will be executed on the wicked, — *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* He confirmed his character and doctrine by astonishing miracles; by healing *all manner of diseases*, commanding *winds and seas* into obedience at his pleasure, and *raising dead bodies to life*, casting

out devils, and other evidences of almighty power. This same divine person, tho' he was the glorious Lord of all, cast contempt on all the wealth and splendor of this world, and submitted to poverty and constant labour and travel: For *he went about doing good, and endured hunger, and thirst and weariness*, that he might work the works of his Father who sent him into the world. And when he had finished the message he was to deliver, he meekly surrendered himself into the hands of his malicious enemies, and *humbled himself to death*, even the ignominious death of the cross, that he might make a perfect atonement for sin by the sacrifice of himself. But he gave the most complete proof that he was indeed the Son of God, as he had all along declared himself to be, by *rising* to life again from the grave, *the third day*, as he had told his disciples before his crucifixion; and then, having *for forty days together shewed himself alive after his passion*, by many infallible proofs, and farther instructed his disciples in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, by ascending into heaven in a cloud in the plain view of his disciples, with a testimony of angels that *he will come again in like manner as he ascended*.

All this taken together is the most wonderful news that was ever proclaimed to mankind. In the proclamation, the divine character of Jesus Christ, his heavenly doctrines, his miraculous works, his astonishing humiliation and sufferings for the sake of sinful men, and the glo-

ry to which he is now exalted as the head of the church, Lord over all things, and the appointed judge of the world, are closely connected; and if, in this connexion, men pay due attention to it, it is sufficient to awaken and reform an ignorant and vicious world.

By this revelation all the characters of the invisible God are clearly manifested. We have full evidence of his existence, the perfect purity of his nature, his moral government, his abhorrence of the wickedness of mankind, and his delight in mercy as far as may be consistent with wisdom and justice. We are taught to fear, and love and obey him. We are deterred from sin by the declaration of future destruction from the Almighty; and are encouraged to repentance and a life of godliness and virtue, by the promise of pardoning mercy, the energy of the Spirit of God, and a glorious immortality in heaven. Our minds are enlightened with heavenly truth, and our hearts subjected to the authority of the Son of God. Instead of superstition, we are taught that worship which is agreeable to the spiritual nature of the supreme Being; and instead of former ignorance, we are brought to see clearly every thing which relates to right conduct, and our happiness in this world and the future. In this revelation we have a most perfect system of divine truth and moral righteousness, far more excellent than the best instructions of the most celebrated philosophers, and beyond comparison more powerful on the mind.

The power of this gospel was evident immediately after the first publication, in *opening the eyes of multitudes* who had been ignorant of the true God, and devoted to the service of idols, and *turning them from darkness to light*, and *from the power of Satan unto God*, so that they received *remission of sins*, were *cleansed from the defilements of vice*, became holy, and obtained *a title to the glorious inheritance of the saints*. It conquered strong prejudices, cast down all proud imaginations and reasonings, which *exalted themselves against the knowledge of God*, and brought *into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*. It prevailed more and more, notwithstanding the violent opposition made by the powers of the world; and numerous converts became worshippers of the true God, and obedient to his will. And notwithstanding the gradual abatement of that attention due to the gospel, which might naturally be expected from length of time, and the great corruptions which insensibly have been mixed with original Christianity, the proclamation continues to have great effect from age to age, on all who hearken to it, and is *the power of God to the salvation of every one who believes*.

What proclamation from heaven, how wonderful, important and powerful soever, can have any effect, unless it is believed? If we do not believe it, our case is the same as if we had never heard it. But our belief of that wonderful message, brought from heaven by the Son

of God, must be answerable to the important design of it: For according to our faith, so is the effect. If our belief of the glorious gospel is weak and doubtful, and we are insensible of our sins, and of the danger of everlasting destruction, the news of pardon and salvation will be received with dull indifference. A proclamation, published every where by the highest authority, must certainly demand very solemn attention. The contents of it cannot be matters of small moment; it must be designed to gain full credit, and to answer some great purpose. In the very nature of it, the accomplishment of the end proposed must depend on its being well known, understood, and fully believed; and for this reason the new testament every where requires faith as the first and great thing necessary in order to salvation. There is not the least hint in the proclamation, that it will save men whether they believe it or not; but it worketh effectually in them that believe it with all the heart.

The knowledge of the glorious characters of Jesus as the Son of God, the Creator, Lord, and heir of all things, who came into the world as the only Redeemer and Saviour of men, and offered himself on the cross as an atoning sacrifice for our sins, shining clearly into the mind, dispels the darkness, presents to the soul new objects of love, fear, hope and joy, It brings spiritual & eternal things into clear view, and turns men from all their lusts and evil courf-

es, to live soberly, righteously and godly in the present world: And this is the beginning of that salvation which will be perfected in heaven.

And now I beg leave to mention two or three plain inferences from what has been said, and conclude with an address to ministers and christian professors.

INF. I. If the original proclamation of the gospel, published through the world by the apostles, contained in it something so alarming as that the Son of God came from heaven with a surprizing message of mercy, and that he died on the cross for our sins, and is now risen and glorified at his Father's right hand in heaven, exalted far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.--If this surprizing proclamation was what produced a most extraordinary change in the moral state of the world, which could not be effected by all the learned labours of the wisest men for many centuries before; how can they be thought to preach the true gospel, who degrade the character of Jesus Christ to that of a meer man, and deprive him of that glory which he had with the Father before the world, or angels, or men existed? They may allow him to be a greater prophet than all who came before him; to have delivered a more perfect system of morals than any before taught; to have practised his own

precepts in the most exemplary manner; to have confirmed his doctrine by the most astonishing miracles; and to have died as a distinguished martyr for truth and righteousness. But all this falls far short of that proclamation which the apostles published concerning him, and would not have produced such immediate and marvellous effects. The character of such an extraordinary man might excite some admiration, and lead the wise men of the world to enquire into the system of morals which he delivered, compare it with their own, and receive it as a great improvement in philosophy: But it would not overpower the mind with the irresistible authority of a messenger sent directly from heaven, God's agent and representative, whom he has employed in all his works, by whom God himself speaks to men. The apostles most certainly proclaimed, that *God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners spake unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.* This was what arrested the attention of mankind. Take away this exalted character of Jesus, and the peculiar glory and power of the gospel is gone.

INF. 2. They who define the gospel only as a most complete system of morality delivered by Christ, and preach it only in this view, are trying over again the same experiment made by the antient philosophers, viz, to persuade

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and reform men by rational arguments, and instruct them in the virtues of social life. Some ministers in the Christian church, to avoid the sneers of deists at the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, and their contempt of the clergy, have seemed willing to compromise matters with them on these terms; viz, that if they will agree to treat the clergy with decency, and consent to be hearers, they will engage not to offend their ears with any disagreeable doctrines, but entertain them merely with lectures on moral virtues. But however such may flatter themselves that they are ministers of Christ, they have really given up the true gospel, and very far advanced to the side of it's adversaries.

INF. 3. When we hear great complaint, that vice is prevailing more and more in Christian countries, we may conclude, either that the gospel is not generally proclaimed in the original grandeur of it's doctrines, with proper zeal and constancy; or that the hearers consider it as something worn out with age, have grown dull of hearing, and by long withstanding the most powerful means of conversion & salvation, are at length given up, in *the righteous judgment of God, to hardness of heart, and blindness of mind, to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.* It is to be hoped the former is not generally the cause of prevailing wickedness at this day in our own land, however it may be in some other na-

tions. And since there are still good numbers of serious Christians, dispersed thro' all our towns and parishes, who appear willing to hearken to the word of Christ, and obey his commands, we have reason to hope God will not wholly forsake us; but revive his work in these declining years, and again awaken all orders and ages to attend to the news of salvation by his Son Christ Jesus our Lord.

I will now say a word or two to my fellow labourers in the gospel.* Permit me to remind myself and you of the important work to which we are called, and the hope we have of good success, if we faithfully preach Christ Jesus the Lord. We are still to continue that same proclamation, which was at first published by the apostles; viz, that God hath exalted that same Jesus, who was crucified, to the highest honors of heaven, and that he was anointed of God to be the prophet, priest and king of his church, according to the scriptures of the antient prophets, and the wonderful attestations from heaven to his divine and mediatorial characters. We must constantly affirm that he is the Creator and Lord of all, and that he is the only Saviour from sin and future wrath. We must declare that when God beheld the whole world lying in wickedness, and strict justice demanded the destruction of the whole human race; when all the wisdom of man could not discover any way of deliverance, or reclaim mankind from their

**This sermon was preached before an association of ministers met at Greenland, in the vicinity of Portsmouth, New-Hampshire, May the 9, 1792.*

woful ftate of ignorance and alienation from him, *he fo loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whofoever believeth in him fhould not perifh, but have everlafting life;* that he now commands all men every where to repent, plead the virtue of the great facrifice offered on the crofs for a free pardon, and heartily commit themfelves to the care and government of the glorious Saviour, that they may be conducted in the way of holinefs by his word and Spirit to everlafting happinefs. We muft declare that the Lord Jefus, having fuffered on the crofs for our fins, arofe again from the dead, afcended into heaven, liveth forever to make interceffion for us, and will come again at the laft day in the glory of the Father, with his holy angels, to judge the world, deftroy his enemies, and receive his faithful difciples into his eternal heavenly kingdom. We muft repeatedly and constantly proclaim the glorious characters of the Saviour, and infift on his high authority, and by this call men to repentance and newnefs of life. We muft teach Chriftians to obey their Lord's commands, and follow his perfect example, and urge them, in confequence of their faith, to all manner of holy converfation and godlinefs. Let us take heed of preaching morality like mere philofophers; but command and exhort Chriftians by the Lord Jefus, that they walk worthy of their holy vocation, and be fruitful in every good work, looking for his fecond coming, that they may be found of him without fpot and blamelefs. And let us depend on God to make his gospel the power-

ful means of saving the souls of our hearers. We have no reason for discouragement, while we preach the original gospel faithfully. We shall *be unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish.* His word will not return unto him void, but will accomplish the great design of saving all that believe it; or make manifest the divine justice in the condemnation of those who refuse to hearken to the gracious message which he has sent by his beloved Son. Let us preach Christ, once crucified, and now glorified, as the apostles did, and God will give us some seals of our ministry to crown us with joy at the last day.

I will conclude with a brief address, as a minister of Christ, to all Christian professors.

We proclaim in your ears, that God hath sent his Son into the world that we may live through him. All have sinned, and become guilty of high offences against the King of heaven, and the laws of his government. The hearts of men are full of evil, and the vices of the world openly shew the opposition of mankind to the holy nature and declared will of God; and he might justly have sent his Son with a message of wrath, to declare his determination to bring speedy destruction upon all the inhabitants of the earth. Your own consciences testify, that you have served divers lusts and vanities, and have transgressed against the precepts of wisdom and righteousness. The wrath

of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; and unless you repent, you must certainly perish. But God is willing to pardon and save you, and is reconciling the world to himself in Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant. He hath not spared his own Son, but delivered him up to death for our offences, and raised him again for our justification. Justice and mercy are magnified together. He has given the fullest testimony against sin in the sufferings of his well beloved Son, when our iniquities were laid upon him; and promised remission of sins for his sake to all that trust in the sacrifice which he has offered. He calls you to confess your sins with godly sorrow, renounce them, and become servants of righteousness, and have your fruit unto holiness, that the end may be eternal life. See that you refuse not to hearken to the glorious messenger sent from heaven. Believe and obey the gospel of Christ, and you will be delivered from wrath, and obtain eternal salvation in heaven. But how can you escape, if you neglect and despise a Saviour of such an exalted character, and go on still in your evil ways? Turn ye. turn ye, why will ye die? If any of you have believed the gospel with all the heart, depart from all iniquity, manifest your faith by observing all things whatsoever Christ has commanded. He is your glorious king, and you must honour and obey him: His government is wise and just, and all his servants

esteem themselves happy in their absolute subjection to him. Never persuade yourselves you have attained to the faith required, unless the great design of the gospel proclamation is answered. You are called to attend to it, that you may be saved from your sins, and live unto God; and this is the effect of that faith which saves men. You are called to glory and virtue; to seek glory, honour, and immortality by patient continuance in well doing: and the more you abound in every good work, so much the firmer will your assurance be that you shall never fall, but have an entrance administered abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

God grant that Christ's ministers and people may be acknowledged by him at his appearing, and rejoice together in his presence forever.

AMEN.

S E R M O N L X V I I .

THE BUSINESS OF LIFE, AND HOPE IN
DEATH.*

BY

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Acts xiii. 36.

For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption.

Paul, that eminent apostle of Jesus Christ, having an opportunity of preaching the gospel at Antioch in Pisidia, in a synagogue of the Jews, reasons from the scriptures, and by several remarkable passages clearly proves, that God had raised up a Saviour, Jesus, the promised son of David; and declares that after his

* This sermon was preached at Hamptonfalls, Jan 22, 1786; being the Lord's day following after the funeral of MESHECH WFARE Esq. President of the State of New-Hampshire, whose character was inserted but now is omitted, as the subject is designed for more general use.

crucifixion by the malice of the jewish elders, God had raised him from the dead, and sent the word of salvation both to Jews and Gentiles, promising to all believers justification unto life eternal.

In the course of his argument he takes particular notice of two or three remarkable passages in the old testament, which plainly speak of the Messias. His first quotation is from the second psalm; where the eternal Father, speaking of the Messias, says, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*: This he brings as plainly implying the high dignity of God's anointed above all creatures, and also his endless life, or sure recovery from death and the grave to supereminent glory in God's presence. He then produces another passage from Isa. lv. 3. where God says by the prophet, *Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David*; and then goes on to describe the Messias as a leader and commander of the people sent from heaven. This text the apostle mentions as implying, that the Messias was to be a person on whom all mankind might depend, even to the end of the world, for the enjoyment of all blessings, and unerring conduct in the way to eternal happiness; which could not be true, if that great person was to be a mere man, liable, equally with earthly monarchs, to be stript of all dignity and authority by death. Then lastly, he refers his hear-

ers to those words in the sixteenth Psalm, *For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.* As this text was generally understood by the jewish Rabbies of that day to have respect to the Messiah, the apostle presses it upon them, as evidently implying that he was to suffer death; but that he should not see corruption, but be raised from the grave by the divine power, in a manner which should distinguish him from all other men. And to prevent every evasion of this capital argument, he particularly proves that David could not be supposed to speak these things of himself; because if he had reference to his own exemption from the corruption of the grave, and his restoration from the state of the dead, what he said was plainly proved false by the event: For however great and good a man he was, and however favoured by heaven, he was not in any respect exempted from the common law of mortality; but having been a servant to the will of God in his own generation, he fell asleep in death, was buried in the sepulchre of his fathers, and like them corrupted in the grave without a release. Therefore the apostle's inference was undeniably just, that these words are not applicable to any other person than that Jesus, who was raised from the dead by divine power, before he had seen corruption, of which fact all the apostles were appointed to be special witnesses.

The design and connexion of our text appears

by what has been observed: But I shall not consider it in an argumentative view. The simple affirmation of what was plainly verified in David, is sufficient to afford us very useful instructions as to the life and death of the most eminent men. While they live, they serve their own generation by the will of God; or, as the greek may as well be translated, they minister to the will of God in their own generation; and then fall asleep in death, are laid unto their fathers, and see corruption. If we attend to the text, and digest it well on our thoughts, it teaches us our duty in life; our true honour and happiness; what forms a great and good character meriting universal esteem; how limited our time of service in this world; and what reason we have to rejoice that the gospel softens down the terrifying idea of death, by the assurance of a resurrection of the dead; that notwithstanding the most eminent servants of God must see corruption, they only fall asleep, to awake at the last day, and live forever with Christ.

I. We may observe in our text, what is our duty in life, viz, to serve our own generation by the will of God; or, in another construction of the words, to minister to the will of God in our own generation; and that this is our true honor, as great a character as we can aim at.

Every man has some part of service to per-

form for the benefit of the world in his own day. God, who originally fixed the constitution and order of things, requires every man to act in subserviency to the general plan, and do every duty for which he is qualified, and which arises from our various situations, connections and subordinations in life.

Whether we pay regard to God the universal King, and perform the work which we have to do in the world as his servants, with reverence of his authority, and a desire of his approbation; or from no other views than to provide for our own comfort and pleasure, and secure the advantages of social intercourse with mankind; we find it necessary to be employed in one way or another, and cannot pass thro' life wholly unactive.

There are indeed some persons who seem to have come into the world for almost no service. They spend their days in folly and idleness, make no good improvement of the powers of body or mind, pay little attention to their own interest in any respect, and, after having made their appearance among mankind for a time, just to fill up an empty place, die unlamented, and are immediately forgotten, as if they had never been. But he that, in the lowest situation of life, contributes the smallest part to the general business of the world, to the utmost of his talents and opportunities, so far ministers to the will of God, and answers the purposes of his present existence.

The world in general is continually in action, engaged in a vast diversity of labors and designs; in providing the necessaries of life, pursuing conveniences, or luxurious and pleasurable gratifications, cultivating the ground, carrying on manufactures and mechanical arts, and managing the various branches of commerce; or enriching their minds with treasures of knowledge, and tracing the boundless openings of science; or engaging in the many public offices necessary for the welfare of civil and religious society, and managing the arduous affairs of kingdoms.

It is impossible for multitudes to live together in safety and comfort without the form & order of civil society. The providence of God points out the necessity of government; the world in general is sensible of it; and tho' tyranny often usurps the place of rational authority, yet men willingly submit to the heaviest yoke, rather than suffer the miserable consequences of anarchy by the dissolution of government. But when civil society is formed on rational principles, plainly tending to promote the happiness of the whole body, it resembles the order which takes place among the angels of heaven, and the supreme government of the King of kings; and every man who fills a station of eminence in such a government, and discharges the duties of it wisely and faithfully, merits high esteem and honor. Civil rulers, in exalted stations, who use their authority for *a terror to evil doers*, and an encouragement to

them that do well, are as gods to their fellow men; and, to excel in communicating the blessings of good government to the multitudes of mankind, deserves far greater renown than that of mighty heroes, whose only glory was that they deluged the earth in blood, and triumphed in the distresses of their fellow mortals.

The military man performs a necessary and honorable part, and must rise high in the esteem of his country, when he employs his martial courage and skill to defend it from unprovoked hostile invasions and depredations. So long as the lusts of men are warring within them, and breaking thro' all restraints, nations, as well as individuals, will commence enemies to each other, and from time to time fill the world with the din of arms. No nation can be secure of uninterrupted peace; and to be always prepared to repel invaders, is the surest way to keep all enemies at a distance. Therefore the virtues of a great general, whose martial ardor is inspired by love to his country, directed by superior wisdom and prudence, and tempered with all the feelings of humanity and principles of justice, cannot fail to place him in a very exalted point of view, both to his country and the world: For he serves his generation in matters of great concern, in defending liberty, property, and life, while he exposeth himself to every hardship and danger; and his officers and soldiers claim some share in his

honor, as far as they copy the same characters. Who can rival the dignity of a WASHINGTON, whose patriotism was completely disinterested, and in whom all excellencies united to save these american States?

The ministers of justice also, and all subordinate officers of civil society, who assist in promoting the important ends of government, and extend it's salutary influence through all particular bodies and orders of people, are fixed by divine providence in their several posts of service, that they may accomplish the will of God, and do good in their generation by securing the peace and order of the world.

Likewise men of superior learning, who carry arts and sciences to greater perfection among mankind, and enrich the world with new discoveries, and all the useful improvements of genius; whether they are employed in the instruction of youth, or as divines, physicians, or lawyers, do great service in their generation, when they direct their learning to the glory of God, and the benefit of men.

The merchant serves his generation agreeably to the will of God, by the prudent, honest, and industrious management of that commerce which encourages agriculture and all kinds of labor, and supplies us with every comfort and convenience of life.

Tradesmen of almost every sort, who dili-

gently, and honestly pursue their several occupations, are likewise to be considered as ministering to the divine will, by promoting the wise designs of his good providence in their day. Their various callings are necessary for the general benefit of the world, and he, who by infinite wisdom orders all the affairs of men, hath appointed them to these different employments.

The same may be said of those whose business is on the seas, who hazard their lives to maintain an intercourse among the nations, or by the toils of the fishery bring in the wealth of the ocean; and likewise of such as by daily labor on the land procure their necessary support, and assist in the business of the world. All these are useful in their generation. No man is to be despised who acts his part well, and improves his natural powers in that way which providence has pointed out to him, tho' in the lowest services of the great family.

The husbandman, however his employment may be despised by men of pride and pleasure, is doing that work for which man was originally designed. Adam was sent into the garden of Eden to dress and keep it, and was commanded to replenish the earth and subdue it. Out of the ground God causes every thing to grow which is necessary for food, and hath made all men dependent on the increase of the field: It is the support of kings, as well as the lower

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ranks of men; and without the continual labors of the farmer, all must soon perish under the curse pronounced on the earth in consequence of the entrance of sin. Far the greater part of men are called to this primitive employment; and it might greatly increase the happiness of the nations, if multitudes, who are now busy only in ministering to the most foolish and pernicious luxuries of the world, could be induced to quit their busy idleness for the useful employment of tilling the ground, which, in it's very nature, is free from temptations to vice, and friendly to virtue and religion. Therefore let not the farmer be ashamed of his employment, or envy the inhabitants of populous cities, as living an easier life, and enjoying more pleasure; but be content with the blessings with which God rewards his labors, and thankful that he hath every thing necessary for his comfort, and power to contribute his part towards the expences of society, and the support of the world.

While we serve our generation in any such ways as have been mentioned, we are ministering to the will of God, as servants under him to do what he, who governs all things, hath made necessary for the general order and benefit of mankind. The divine will hath appointed, and continually regulates, the frame and all the movements of the universe; every relation and connexion of human affairs; and every part which is proper to be acted among the many

millions who inhabit this globe ; and every thing is balanced so as may best concur with the great ends of his universal empire : Nor can these ends be defeated by the weakness or wickedness of men ; but his wisdom, goodness and justice will be manifested in the final issue of things.

But if we consider our relation to another world, and would hope for a reward hereafter for all our service in the present world, we must govern our conduct, even in the common concerns of life, by a religious regard to God, and a sincere habitual desire to do every thing agreeable to his will. All Christians ought to observe that apostolic direction : *Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* We belong to Christ, and must be devoted to his service, who hath redeemed us by his own most precious blood ; and, aiming to know the whole compass of our duty in life, we must attend, not only to the more immediate exercises of godliness, but to every part of that work to which we are called in common life, according to our several stations and capacities. Whether our talents are more or less, they must be faithfully improved. He that hath but one, must not neglect it ; and he to whom God hath given greater abilities, and who is called to more difficult and distinguishing services, must not decline the labor, but do his work with activity and patience ; not merely with a view of gaining human applause, but

that he may have his master's approbation, when he is called to give an account of himself to God.

This was the great honor of David and Solomon, that they were obedient to God's will, and sought his glory. This adds peculiar lustre to the character of such as are in elevated stations. The fear of God gives the great and good man activity, firmness of mind, courage in the greatest difficulties, and patience and perseverance in the most arduous labors; and raises him equally above the flatteries and censures of the world: By this even our common employments become acts of religion; and diligence and fidelity, even in the lowest business of this life, will secure the rewards of the future world.

What has been said prepares the way for the farther instructions contained in the text; therefore I shall now lay before you a second observation, viz.

II. That we have a very limited time of service in this world, and must soon be gathered to our fathers, and see corruption in the grave.

The inhabitants of this earth remain the same but a short space of time; they are continued by a constant succession of generations. *One generation passeth away*, says the royal preacher,

and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever. There are now hundreds of millions of men living on this globe, all busily employed, and as thoughtless of any change as if their residence were fix'd here forever. Yet it is evident, by repeated observations on the numbers of deaths and births in populous places, that, taking one with another, the life of man is finish'd in about forty years, and that the whole number of the inhabitants is changed in that short period, & a new generation appears on the stage. We ourselves, who have by divine goodness continued in the business of the world forty or fifty years, may plainly observe in the places which we have known, how the fathers are generally gone, and a young multitude is risen up in their room. Yet the affairs of the world keep their course; as soon as one man is called off from his station by death, another takes his place, and all the designs of providence and grace are carried on by a succession of instruments.

Therefore men can only serve God in their own generation. They are called to work in their own day, until the night of death comes, when their labor is over. David was raised to the throne, to complete the conquest of the enemies of Israel, perfect the government which God had established among them, and prepare the rich materials for a magnificent temple, that the name of Jehovah might be universally known and glorified among the Gentiles.

Great was the work which he accomplished, and he had the honor of being a remarkable type and progenitor of the expected Saviour of Israel: But his day at length was finished: Tho' he reigned forty years, and was constantly active in war and government, yet nature could not hold out longer, and he yielded his crown with all it's cares to his son, and fell asleep in death. The same period of years finished the glory of Solomon's reign, bro't on an unhappy change in the kingdom, and made way for a series of national calamities. Thus all the following kings acted their several parts; some well, many of them very wickedly; and died, some with honor, after having done many worthy things; others, with infamy, having been guilty of the greatest crimes, and leaders in the corruption of religion. The antient prophets were sent, one after another, as messengers of God to his people; and when they had finished their testimony, were called away by death. And the apostles of our Lord Jesus in a few years accomplished their ministry, and left the churches to be taken care of and continued thro' all future ages by a succession of pastors. Thus we see all societies going on continually, all offices in kingdoms and states changing from hand to hand, as death puts an end to the service of one, and then of another. None are suffered to continue long, either in public or private life.

That sentence, *Dust thou art, and unto dust*

shalt thou return, extends to every descendant from Adam, high and low, rich and poor. The empire of death is universal; it has a commission against the wise, the noble, and mighty, as well as against the lower classes of men, often arrests them in an unexpected hour, in the midst of flattering schemes and opening prospects, and lays them in the dust.

Human life once had a long period of many hundred years; but it gave encouragement to an universal spread of wickedness, which, in righteous judgment, God punished by destroying the world with a flood. Therefore when the earth was restored, and proper time allowed for repeopling it, the great Lord of all reduced the life of man to the present contracted measure. And now *the days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we flee away*. But even of this short course of years we have no assurance. Very few continue to such advanced age; our bodies are subjected to a multitude of fatal diseases, which at the earliest years may finish our life. Neither are we secure a day or a moment from some sudden attack of our grand enemy, which, without warning, may join us with the congregation of the dead.

When we look back, how soon have we run thro' our early youth! How speedily have we

pass'd along to thirty, forty, or fifty years! And how very short does all our past life appear! We comprehend the whole of it in one glance of tho't; it is as yesterday when it is past, or the dream of a night, or a tale that is told. And if we look forward, and number our remaining days with wisdom, we shall sum up the account in the same concise manner, and be ready to join heartily with the psalmist, and say, *My days are an hand-breadth, and mine age as nothing before thee; verily every man at his best estate in altogether vanity.*

When our minds and hands are engaged in business which we are earnest to finish, time passes away swifter than we are aware. We find it is gone before the work is accomplished, and see the necessity of improving every moment. Just so, if our hearts are intent upon serving God and our generation, we shall think life very short, and see the necessity of doing with our might whatever our hands find to do. Our day will soon be over. It highly concerns us to make the best improvement of life, that we may not lose the reward of good servants. It requires much time, at first, to furnish ourselves for any distinguishing services. Knowledge is acquired by continual study, observation and experience. We can scarcely perform great things, until we have advanced to the midst of life; and then, as soon as we feel some strength of mind to discharge the duties of more important stations, the symptoms of natural

life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory, and live forever with the Lord. Let us bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, of his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, thro' the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for believers, who are kept by the power of God for that salvation, which is made ready to be revealed at the end of the world. Let this hope be our comfort in the near views of our own death, and when we mourn for our deceased Christian friends.



S E R M O N LXVIII.

THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT MATTER

OF UNIVERSAL JOY.

BY

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Psalms, xcvi. 1.

The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.

These words are part of a description of the awful and glorious Majesty of JEHOVAH, and call upon mankind to rejoice in his universal dominion. Clouds and darknesses are round about him: Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about. His lightnings enlightened the world: The earth saw and trembled. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory.

The earth, and the multitude of isles, are probably used by the Psalmist for the two general divisions of the inhabitants of the world, Jews and Gentiles. The earth is sometimes used in a limited sense in the sacred writings. Isles is an appellation frequently given in the old testament to the Gentiles, or to the nations who did not descend from Abraham. Isaiah writes, when prophesying of Christ and the extent of his kingdom, He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law. In looking back to the origin of nations, in Genesis xth. we find that the isles of the Gentiles were first inhabited by the descendants of Japhet; who remained in paganish darkness for many hundred years after the Psalmist's time. Enlightened by the spirit of inspiration, he looked forward to the day when the lamp of divine truth would be carried beyond the bounds of Canaan, and calls not only upon the people who now enjoyed revelation, but also upon the multitude of nations who should hereafter be visited with the day spring from on high, to be glad and rejoice in the universal and gracious dominion of the only true God.

Let us at this time consider the divine government, and the causes of rejoicing which it affords.

In considering God's government of the world, we are led,

I. To acknowledge his right as its Author. It is impossible to account for the existence of creatures, without having recourse to an uncreated, eternal, independent Spirit as the cause, who must possess the highest perfection. *The Lord he is God, it is he who hath made us, and not we ourselves.* He created the heavens and the earth, and all the variety of inhabitants which people the air, the earth, or the sea. His right to govern the world must be original and unalienable. *The earth is the Lords, and the fullness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein.*

II. God alone can uphold creatures in being. All the power which they can possess, must be wholly derived from their Author. There can be but one Being in the universe who is independent. This Being must be God: He will not give his glory to another. Could creatures support themselves in existence, they would become independent, would cease to be under the divine government, and might overthrow it, or at least prevent the accomplishment of it's designs. To ascribe independence to creatures, would be as absurd as to predicate of them a duration which has no beginning.

The inspired writers are abundant in representing the absolute dependence of all creatures on God. When the apostle Paul, in the xvii. of Acts, is reproving the superstition of the Athenians, and showing their ignorance in worshipping *the unknown God*, he calls their at-

tention to the only true Deity, the Creator of all things. He goes on to infer the obligation of all to seek the Lord, from reasons which they might find in their own poets, drawn from the light of nature, and conformable to the doctrine revealed from heaven. *For in him we live, and move, and have our being.*

III. The government of God is universal. *He hath shut up the sea with doors--And said hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed. He commandeth the morning, and causeth the day spring to know his place. He hath made the sun to rule by day, and the moon and stars to rule by night. The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He is the father of the rain, and he begetteth the drops of dew. He watereth the hills from his chambers; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of his works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth. The eyes of all creatures wait on God; and he giveth them their meat in due season.*

The divine government extends to man; and that not merely as a class of creatures, but to each individual of the race. To say, as some have, that divine providence must be general, and not particular, is to involve ourselves in insuperable difficulties, and tends to plunge us into the depths of infidelity. The friends of this creed must be obliged to tell when any

number or combination of men becomes large enough to attract the attention of the supreme Ruler. But where will they find the scale marked with such nice gradations, as to answer their design? Again, if we can argue at all from the things which are made, concerning him who created them, we must admit that there is uniformity of design amidst all the endless variety of his works. The phrase, "The beauties of nature," can have no meaning on any other plan. Hence the conclusion is obvious, that general providence must be made up of particular things, or events: And therefore a denial of a particular providence, will go to the denial that God governs the world.

When we look on the page of inspiration, we find the divine government extending to the smallest concerns of man, and at the same time embracing all the affairs and changes of nations. Christ, in comforting the hearts of his disciples against the malice of their enemies, reminds them of the particular providence of their great Preserver. *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.* The rise and fall of individuals and empires depend on the sovereign pleasure of the Almighty. *The Most-High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from*

the south: But God is the Judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another.

We may go up to an higher order of intelligences, and behold angels ministring before the throne of God. *The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. The Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place.* These holy beings are servants to execute the purposes of divine providence and grace. *They are all ministring spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.*

The angels who rebelled, and were cast out of heaven, are not removed from the universe, nor have they escaped from the eye of omniscience, or the arm of the Almighty. *The angels who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, be hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.* The dominion of Jehovah extends to all events, to all creatures, and to all worlds--heaven, earth and hell.

IV. All second causes are under the direction and control of the Most High. This is a necessary consequence of the absolute dependence of the whole creation on its Author, and the universal extent of the divine government.

Second causes are of two kinds, natural and moral. It does not appear that perpetuity was designed for any part of the natural world;

decay begin to come on; and before we can proceed far in the greater labors of life for the glory of God and the good of mankind, old age with all it's infirmities weakens our powers, and hastens us to the end of our work.

Where are all our fathers, who a few years ago were busy as we are in all the affairs of the world?--They are gone! *The dust is returned to the dust, as it was; and the spirit to God who gave it.* They rest in their graves, and at the resurrection will receive the due reward of their labors. And our bodies must shortly be laid with them, and their whole curious form and texture suffer a dissolution. The grave is the *house appointed for all living.* In a short time we all shall be lodged in that dark abode. Let us frequently entertain these sober thoughts, and resolve to improve the short day of life with the greatest diligence, that we may finish well the work now assigned us; and so be ready to depart, and die in the joyful hope of an admission into the glorious society of heaven, and of obtaining the honor and felicity of God's eternal kingdom.

For our comfort under just apprehensions of the short time to which our services are limited, we will now attend to the last head of instruction deduced from the text, viz.

III. That we have reason to rejoice that the gospel softens down the dreadful idea of death,
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by assuring us of the resurrection of the dead ; that tho' the most eminent servants of God must see corruption, yet it may with propriety be affirmed, that they only fall asleep, to awake again at the last day, and live for-ever with Christ.

If death were the total destruction of man, of his nobler part together with his bodily frame, and no prospect of a future life had been opened to us, no words cou'd be sufficient to persuade us to consider it in a friendly view, and banish our dread. To beings who are continually extending their desires and hopes, and cannot be satisfied with the present moment of enjoyment, but always connect it with the tho't of it's continuance, and anticipations of good things yet to come, it must be shocking to consider, that the whole of life is but a delusive dream, which will soon, and may suddenly, end in absolute non-existence, without leaving the least trace behind ; nor would the disheartening idea admit of any palliation. Yet it seems evident from the scriptural account of the primitive state, and the condition on which life and happiness depended, that the threatening of death implied the total destruction of the first pair, and in them the whole intended race. We have reason to suppose this would have been really the effect of the sentence pronounced upon man after he had sinned, that it would immediately have reduced him to non-existence, if Jesus the Son of God, the second

Adam, had not been constituted a new head of the human race; who in the fulness of time assumed our flesh and blood, and humbled himself by suffering death, that he might obtain a complete triumph over this formidable enemy of our nature, by his resurrection from the dead, and give us an assurance of final deliverance from it's power. What idea cou'd Adam have of death, but what he would naturally conceive from the death of any insect which might be crushed under his feet? He must suppose there was an end of it's existence, and that to him death would be the same. He could know nothing of a resurrection; for this comes by Christ, the new head of mankind, as the apostle plainly affirms, I Cor. 15. 21, 22. *For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* But if Adam could know nothing of the resurrection, he cou'd entertain no expectation of existence in a future state; for this hope is introduced solely by the resurrection of Christ, and depends on the certainty of the resurrection of our bodies, in consequence of a promise given by our Lord Jesus, agreeably to the same apostle's argument from the twelfth to the twentieth verse of the fore-mentioned chapter. All our hope of eternal life in another world is grounded upon the express promise of the gospel, according to the repeated declarations of the new testament.--*That eternal life is the free gift of God by Jesus Christ.* "That we have received the future inheritance

“by promise’--And “that the gospel contains
“the record of this gift promised only in Christ.”
Therefore he that hath the Son, or sincerely
believes on him, hath life; and he that believ-
eth not on the Son of God, hath no claim to
the promise of eternal happiness. Life and
immortality are bro’t to light by the gospel,
after the more obscure revelation of them un-
der the old testament. Now we depend not on
the uncertain conjectures of our own minds, or
dark hints given from which we must make re-
mote deductions, or the plausible reasonings of
philosophers on the present state of things in-
troduced by the Mediator’s reign. All such
arguments for a future life would be inconclu-
sive, if we had not an express revelation to
confirm our belief of it. We accordingly find
the greatest philosophers of antient times, after
they have produced the strongest arguments
which reason cou’d suggest in favour of an hap-
py existence in another world, yet discovering
some remaining doubts which they could not
wholly remove. Therefore every man who
sets himself to oppose the revelation given from
heaven, must at the same time renounce the
only positive evidence of a future life, and de-
stroy the foundation of man’s highest hope and
comfort.

In consequence of what the Mediator has
done and suffered for us, sincere believers are
restored from the ruins of human nature, to
the hope of a more glorious state of happiness

than that from which Adam fell. We look not for an earthly paradise again, but an heavenly ; and tho' we suffer in the present world, complain of vanity in all enjoyments, and must be bro't down to the dust in consequence of the original sentence against sin ; yet we shall be recovered from the corruption of the grave, receive pure and spiritual bodies at the resurrection, and be in every respect fitted for the life of angels.

In this view of the resurrection, death bears the resemblance of *sleep*, and may well be called by the same name. The sleep is long indeed ; but it has a certain period, and we shall awake again with new life and vigour. Death has but a limited power over our bodies, and cannot destroy the spiritual part of our nature. When the dust returns to the dust as it was, the spirit goes to God who gave it. The old habitation is taken down, that it may be framed anew, and appear in greater perfection ; and the soul will re-enter, with heavenly transport, and find it made ready for endless and most refined enjoyments.

When our Lord Jesus had assured Martha that her brother Lazarus should rise again, and declared himself to be the resurrection and the life, he affirms, that *whosoever liveth and believeth on him, shall never die*. According to the common notion of death, this is not verified in fact ; for believers die as other men : But when

death is considered, not as the end of our existence, but as a sleep, in order to a more perfect renovation of our nature & a resurrection to eternal life, there is great propriety in what our Lord affirms, that *whosoever believeth on him, shall never die*. It was in this view that he said to his disciples, *Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep*. And on this depends the propriety of that frequent phrase in the old testament, *He slept with his fathers*; and the almost invariable use of the word *sleep* instead of *death* thro' all the new testament.

Have we not therefore abundant reason to rejoice, that death is thus really disarmed of it's greatest terrors; that we are assured it will not be utter destruction, that it will be only as the rest of a night; and that, when the glorious morning comes, we shall awake with delightful rapture, and find all sorrows past away, and uninterrupted heavenly pleasures succeeding. This glorious hope we have by the second Man, the Lord from heaven, who hath abolished death, and bro't life and immortality into the clearest view of faith by the gospel. Surely our hearts must be filled with gratitude to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that by appointing so glorious a Mediator at the head of the human race, instead of fallen Adam, he hath mercifully delivered us from that total destruction with which death threatened human nature, and assured all who heartily embrace the promises of the new covenant, that they shall rise from the

grave, as from a bed of sleep, at the last day, and live for ever in an heavenly paradise.

We have been led by our text to consider the various services to which God calls us in this world, according to the ranks and stations in which he has placed us, and the abilities and opportunities which he has given; and that it is our honor to do the work assigned us with diligence and fidelity, knowing that we serve the Lord Christ. By this let all Christians be quickened to perform their proper part of duty in their generation. Let none think themselves so much below notice in the world, or the part which they can perform so insignificant, as to be careless of their duty. The meanest servant in God's great family is under his notice, and will receive a reward according to his labor. All are capable of doing something to promote the common good of the world and of the church, and should have regard to the present constitution and order of the whole; and if they discharge their duty, as his servants, agreeably to his will, he will finally grant them a glorious immortality in heaven. But if he has given us greater capacities, advantages and opportunities than others, let us remember that he expects we should distinguish ourselves by being more remarkably useful in our generation; and that that is our honor among men, and will give us a more joyful hope of exalted happiness in the future world.

You have attended to the thought, that we can only serve our own generation; that the time of our service is short; and that we must soon sleep with our fathers in the grave. Therefore be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, for God, or man, or thine own soul, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest.* Let a short life be filled with the best employment. Prize every passing moment; and hold on in well doing to the end, with constant prayer and watchfulness. *Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh, shall find so doing.*

You have heard what a different idea of death is given us by our Lord Jesus, from that which was implied in the original sentence pronounced on man for sin; that it no longer contains in it the horror of an absolute destruction of human nature, but may be viewed as a tyrant, disarmed and subdued, whose captives are set free, and advanced to higher felicity by what they have suffered from him. Tho' we die, it is only like falling asleep; for we shall live again. Therefore let us not fear to allow death some entertainment in our thoughts; it will make us wiser and more diligent, and fortify our minds to meet it. Our day will shortly be ended. We shall be wearied with labor, and must fall asleep, and rest till the glorious morning of the resurrection; but *when he who is our*

The changes, waste and decay, to be discerned as far as discoveries have gone, forbid the idea. Undesigning, perishing matter can have no energy within itself; but must necessarily be under the direction of the Creator. The more attentively we examine the laws of nature, the more evident it appears that their powers of action are wholly derived from the first cause. Hence Chancellor Bacon very justly observes, "That a little or superficial knowledge may incline the mind of man to atheism; but a surther proceeding therein doth bring the mind back again to religion. For in the entrance of philosophy, when the second causes which are next unto the senses, do offer themselves to the mind of man, if it dwell and stay there, it may induce some obligation of the first cause; but when a man passeth on further, and seeth the dependence of causes, and the works of providence, then, according to the allegory of the poets, he will easily believe that the highest link of nature's chain must be tied to the foot of Jupiter's chair." We must rebel against the clearest light, if we do not join with this great master of science in improving the allusion borrowed from pagan fable, for the purpose of engaging our attention to the agency of the only true God, constantly operating in his own world. A devout man cannot withhold confessing the power of a present God, displayed through nature, when he contemplates the appearances in the skies, the earth and the ocean. Is it possible that

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lifeless clay can maintain such order? If one can be found who is stupid enough to indulge such thoughts, let him take reproof, and learn wisdom, from the grass and the lily of the field, and from the growth, changes, death and resurrection of flies and worms.

In tracing the operation of second causes of the *moral* kind, whatever scheme of moral agency we adopt, we are driven back to the first cause, to account for all the powers of action in rational creatures. Passing all controversies on this intricate subject, two things are very plain. One is, that our dependence on God must be perfect; the other is, that no violence can be offered to our volitions. We are furnished with indisputable arguments to prove the *first*; and of the *last* we have full and irresistible evidence, when we recur to the operations of our own minds.

'The scriptures are full of instances, which show that the hearts of all men are in the hand of the Lord, and that, as the rivers of water, he turneth them whithersoever he will.

That the Spirit of God can breathe on the heart, and support piety and integrity amidst an overflowing deluge of wickedness, is plain from the instances of Noah, Abraham, Lot and others. Divine wisdom and grace are conspicuous in forming persons for high and important stations, to which their thoughts never turn-

ed, till providence, in its mysterious course, raised them to the eminence for which they were born. In the most illustrious mortal characters, which are handed down to us in sacred history, we may plainly discern early traits, which laid a foundation for influence, for enterprize, and encountering difficulties with fortitude. Genius is not created by the renovation of the heart; nor is it buried by inspiration. We find a great diversity of gifts among the prophets and apostles. Paul was formed by the God of nature for intense application to study and business. By the former, he was fitted to distinguish truth from error; and by the latter, to encounter perils by sea and land, perils from pretended friends and open enemies, and from the learned and unlearned. From the day when Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus, and the scales fell from his eyes, he commenced an apostle and minister of Christ, and labored more abundantly than all the other apostles in the propagation and defence of Christianity.

While illustrating the divine government, in directing and controlling second causes of the moral kind, we may not pass in silence instances, in which idolaters and wicked men have been made instruments of good to the church of God.

Was not the hand of God conspicuous in preserving the important life of Moses in his infancy, by the daughter of Pharaoh? She

with her maidens were walking on the banks of the river, where she happened to spy the ark among the flags, which contained the future favour of his nation. She sends her maid to fetch the little chest, which had excited her curiosity. We tremble for the precious treasure, while on its way to the daughter of a monarch, who had hardened his heart against parental feelings, and had doomed to instant death every male child born among the Hebrews. We fear, that in a few moments Moses will be thrown into the river, to drown with the other infants of his nation. The ark is brought--it is opened--the babe weeps--his artless tears plead for him--the young princess of Egypt has compassion on the helpless, perishing infant, commits him to a nurse, adopted him as her son, and gave him an education in that court which he was one day to destroy.

God called Cyrus, though Cyrus knew him not, to subdue nations, and overthrow Babylon; to make way for the return of the Jews to their own land, after a long captivity of seventy years. He let them go without price or reward. He encouraged their return, and the rebuilding of their city and temple, by a generous proclamation, by restoring the vessels of the house of the Lord captured by Nebuchadnezzar, and by treasures collected from his own people.

In the reign of Ahasuerus, a plot was laid

to cut off, in one day, the Jews who were dispersed throughout the vast empire of Persia. Before the day came for the cruel tragedy to be acted, the slumbers of the monarch were disturbed--On a certain night sleep departed from his eyes. For his amusement in his wakeful hours, he called his servants to his bedside, and commanded them to read a portion of the chronicles of the realm. The reader, under unknown influence from Him who hath the hearts of all men in his hand, opened on a passage which narrated a conspiracy formed against the king's life, and which had been crushed by the discovery of Mordecai the Jew, the great patron of his nation. Mordecai was the man who provoked Haman, the prime minister of Ahasuerus, to procure the bloody decree, which was designed soon to be executed on all the Jews in the kingdom. The king enquired whether any honor had been done to Mordecai for his fidelity. On hearing that he had not been rewarded, he calls upon Haman to prescribe a mode of conferring honor on a favorite. This proud man, ignorant of his royal master's design, and flushed with the imaginary prospect of blazoning his own glory, pointed out a mode, which comprized a display of all the pomp which would charm a favourite in an eastern court. To his unspeakable confusion, he was directed to be the minister who should confer such honor on Mordecai. This event was an important incident in the train of events, which brought ruin on Ha-

man, and saved the people of God from destruction.

Often has the wrath of man been made to praise God, while the instrument was intent on gratifying his own pride and malevolence. The Christian can never forget the bloody scene displayed on mount Calvary, where Herod, Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel, were the perpetrators of a deed, which caused the sun in the firmament to hide his face, and all nature to utter a groan. Yet on this event depends the ransom of the souls of men.

Having made a few observations on the divine government, let us proceed in the *second* place, to consider the causes of *rejoicing* which it affords. These are comprized under two general heads--the benevolence of its design, and the certainty of its accomplishment.

We cannot doubt the perfection of the present system, when we consider the boundless knowledge, wisdom and goodness of its Author. Evil had not been suffered to exist, had its permission been inconsistent with the wisdom and benevolence of the Deity, or the fullest display of his moral perfections. These constitute the glory of the Most High, and render him an object infinitely deserving the love, homage and confidence of all the intelligent creation. The perfections of God are displayed in harmony :

and the infinitude of knowledge and power which he possesseth, is employed in doing good. *The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works.* When we consider the character of the God of love as opened in his word, we are sure that his conduct is governed by an ultimate regard to the highest felicity and glory of his moral kingdom; whether he pardon transgressors, or make them feel his wrath in the present world, or exclude them from happiness in the next.

God hath chosen to display his attributes in the face of Jesus Christ, *who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.* Gloriously did the divine character shine, when Christ was condemning sin in the flesh, and unfolding the charms of infinite love, by his discourses, his obedience, his agony, and by *pouring out his soul unto death.* The same glorious purpose is advanced by his resurrection and ascension. He is seated at the right hand of the Father, and is exalted *far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.* And God hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. Hence also the apostle Paul, speaking of the final victory of all believers through Christ their head, declares this to be the way in which God is glorified: *For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might,*

through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God.

It is very obvious from the current of scripture, that this world stands as a theatre for the display of redeeming love, and that the whole of its government is made subservient to the good of the church. If an empire rise or fall, the change is designed, in some way or other, to plead the cause of Zion. The ten kings, which John in a vision saw rising up to support Anti-christ, for a time give their power and strength unto the beast ; till at length the period comes when their friendship is turned into hatred, and they destroy the domination, which they had lent their wealth and their arms to establish and aggrandize in past ages. These things take place to inflict full vengeance on those who corrupt the gospel, and to manifest divine mercy to those who keep their garments undefiled. The policy and power of the ten kings are made to praise God, in accomplishing the designs of his love. *For, as John writes, God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.*

On every survey of the design of God's government, we find it terminating in the fullest display of the excellencies of the divine mind, and opening the only source of real happiness to man. Though none by searching can find out the Almighty unto perfection ; yet all

may be convinced, that *righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne*; and that none who put their trust in him shall be confounded. This leads me to observe,

That the benevolent design of God's government will be accomplished. Moral goodness must involve faithfulness: They are often expressly united in the proclamations which Jehovah maketh of his great name, and in the thanksgivings which are offered to him in the sacred volume. *The Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.* His dominion is accompanied with boundless knowledge and almighty power. *Great is our Lord, and of great power; his understanding is infinite.* He hath declared, *My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.* If our hearts be warmed with the love of God, we cannot refrain from rejoicing in his government under all its appearances. It proclaims *glory to God in the highest, and good will towards men*: It is promoted by all events in providence; and will fill its enemies with confusion, and its friends with joy, in the day when all creatures shall appear at the bar of God, and his righteous judgment shall be revealed before the assembled worlds.

I M P R O V E M E N T.

1. It appears from the subject of this discourse, that the plan of the divine government

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must be unchangeable. Where is there room for change? God cannot cease to be the Author or supporter of his own world. All creatures derived their existence from him, and must depend on him for its continuance: All second causes must remain forever under his direction and control. No cause can be devised, to effect the least change in the plan of divine operation. Men of the most extensive capacities and information may see just reason to vary their purposes and the course of their conduct, from the errors of past life, and from the disclosure of events which had been concealed from the eye of human wisdom. But the mind of Jehovah can admit of no obscurity or enlargement. *Who hath been his counsellor?* His knowledge is intuition, and vast as immensity: No thought can be withholden from him, and he can do every thing which is possible: His goodness is infinite, and is involved in all his counsels. *With the Father of lights there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations.*

2. We may infer the great evil of murmuring under the dealings of our heavenly Father. We must be strangers to our own hearts, not to discern that we have a strong propensity to rebel against the will of God, when the events of his providence proceed in a course which militates against the attainment of the glory of this world. How criminal must all complaints

against the conduct of the Most High appear, when we consider his right and ability to govern, and the benevolence which guides all his administrations? The language of murmur impeaches the wisdom, justice and goodness of God. *Who art thou O man! who expostulatest with the Sovereign of the world! Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?* Shall not God do what he will with his own? Harken to the voice of Him who sitteth on the throne of the universe: **BE STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD.** The Most High is constantly holding up before the intelligent creation the infinite excellencies of his nature, and is proclaiming the riches of his love throughout his vast dominions. Every devout man must adopt the language of holy David: *O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.*

3. On a review of the extent, ability and end of God's government, his church may derive consolation in the darkest seasons. If, like the bush which Moses saw at Horeb, she be in the midst of devouring flames, she shall not be consumed. Faithful is the Holy One of Israel. He hath promised, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* Nothing can defeat the purposes of infinite wisdom, rectitude and goodness; but all things are governed in subordination to the divine plan. Job believed in this doctrine, and his heart was comforted from it, when all his children were slain, and his whole substance was

destroyed, in one day, by the sword, by fire from heaven, and the fury of the tempest. In this day of mourning, he gave glory to God, and rejoiced in his government, saying, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord.*

In this world we behold the distress of nations, and the church threatened by the lukewarmness of her friends, and the malice of her enemies ; but let us check all anxiety, by calling to mind that the Lord reigneth, and that he is the refuge and strength of his people. He will bring good out of evil, light out of darkness, and order out of confusion. The righteous endure affliction but for a short time : They will not long behold the triumphs of the wicked ; but will soon rise to dominion, and *shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.* If we be reconciled to the government of God, we need not fear the power and malice of wicked men and devils. *All things will become ours, whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come.* Ye children of sorrow ! repair to the fountain of wisdom, power and grace, breathe the spirit of submission and praise, and dry up your tears.

To conclude : Our subject shows, that offering praise to God is a sublime and glorious employment. It hath for its objects the perfections of Jehovah, and the works of his hand. We cannot contemplate such themes with just af-

fections, without joining in the strains of the sweet singer of Israel; *Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honor and majesty.* Meditations on the wonders of providence, and the mysteries of the kingdom of God, will often lead us to break out in the pious and reverent exclamation of the apostle Paul; *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!* All the sons of science, did they act wisely, would become true Christians. The gospel alone holds out substantial reasons for the improvement of the mind, by the field which it opens, and the crown which it promises to the faithful. Happy! thrice happy glorified saints and holy angels, who are students forever in the wonderful works of God! Praise can never falter on their tongues, in the world of light and joy. To the world of love and praise let us all aspire. God grant, of his infinite mercy, that we all may be fitted for that state, where *shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain;* and may mingle our voices with the heavenly choirs, *saying, Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.* Amen.

S E R M O N L X I X .

HUMAN DEPRAVITY THE SOURCE OF INFIDELITY.

BY

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John, vii. 17.

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

Our Lord taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Even his enemies were compelled to admire his abilities and his doctrine. See the 14. & 15. th verses of our context: Now about the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? It was marvellous to them, that a man who had had no advantage of education, who was a carpenter's son, and was himself a carpenter, and of course could not have had much advantage of conversation with

men of learning, even after he had arrived at mature age, should be able to teach so excellently, and to exhibit a system of morals and theology superior to all that had been taught, not only by the Scribes and Pharisees, but even by Moses and the prophets.

The solution which our Lord gave to this question, is, that he received his doctrine from God. See verse 16th. Jesus answered them, and said, *My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.* If this were fact, no wonder his doctrine was so excellent, and that he exhibited it in such an extraordinary manner. At the same time that our Lord thus professed to be a teacher sent from God, he informed them how they might know whether he were right in this pretension: viz. by a willingness to obey God. *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, as I say; or whether I speak of myself, as you imagine.*

And doubtless what our Lord said on this head to the Jews, is equally true concerning us or any other men in these days. If any man be willing to do the will of God, or if he be sincerely disposed to obedience, or to piety toward God and to true virtue toward men, he shall know whether the gospel be a revelation from God, or a mere human invention; and no man will be an infidel, unless he be of a depraved heart. This is manifestly the doctrine of our text; and to illustrate it I purpose,

I. To consider more particularly the import of these words, *If any man will do his will.*

II. To consider the evidence of the consequence thence drawn, *That if any man be sincerely disposed to piety and virtue, he shall know whether the gospel be indeed a revelation from God.*

I. I am to consider the import of these words,
If any man will do his will.

It is manifest by the preceding verse, that the will of God is intended. The words immediately preceding are, *My doctrine is not mine but his that sent me.* Then follow the words of the text: *If any man will do his will &c.* that is, the will of the eternal Father, who sent Christ. Now to do his will is to be really and sincerely obedient to him, in the various duties of piety and true virtue. I say *sincerely* obedient: For no other obedience than that which is sincere, is worthy of the name of obedience, or is considered as any obedience at all by him who looketh on the heart, and by that determines the actions and characters of men; and not as we do, by the mere outward appearance or verbal profession. That real and cordial sincerity of obedience is here intended, is evident, not only by the very nature of the case, as no other is any obedience at all; but by the form of expression in the original: *«νς οὕτως, ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἂν θέλῃ ποιεῖν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρὸς.»* So

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that our Lord plainly meant a sincere and *willing* obedience, in which the *will* and heart are engaged. and not that which is external and visible only.

The parts of this obedience are two ; the first respecting God ; the second our fellow creatures. The first is piety or godliness, the other is morality. Godliness is compliance with the first and chief command of the divine law, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind* ; and from this supreme love to God, to attend on all ordinances of his worship. Therefore this attendance must not be rendered reluctantly, as if it were a burden, a task necessary indeed to be performed, but disagreeable and wearisome : But it must be rendered cheerfully and willingly, with satisfaction and delight. Indeed it will be rendered in this manner, if, according to the text, we be *willing* to do his will ; or if we comply with the first and chief command before recited.

The other branch of obedience respects our fellow creatures, and includes all the duties of morality ; as benevolence, justice, truth, faithfulness and beneficence. The foundation of all these duties is that cordial love or benevolence required in the following divine command ; *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself* ; which our Lord tells us is the second, and like unto the first. All the forementioned duties of morali-

ty must be performed from the same *willing mind*, as the duties of piety. It is by no means enough, that they are performed externally from the motives of fear of human laws, judgments, and executions; or of shame and regard to our reputation. They may be thus performed, and yet by no means be performed *willingly*, as our text requires; but with great reluctance, with no pleasure in those duties themselves, but with real disgust at them. Then only shall we perform them *willingly*, when we perform them from that love to our neighbour, which is correspondent to the love which we bear to ourselves. Then only shall we have a taste or relish for those virtues, or for the real beauty of them.

Thus we see what it is to be willing to do the will of God: It is to have a heart to the practice of sincere piety and true virtue: Or in other words, to love God supremely, and mankind sincerely, or with direct and proper benevolence.

II. I proceed to show, that he who is of this character, shall know whether the gospel be indeed a revelation from God. This I conceive to be evident by both scripture and reason.

I. By scripture. Our text seems to be very clear and pertinent to the present purpose. The question between our Saviour and the Jews was. Whether he were a teacher sent from

God. He affirmed it: They denied it. And in the text he asserts, that if they had a heart to obey God, they would know whether his pretension were well founded, or whether his doctrine, which is the Gospel, were really from God. This text alone, therefore, if there were no other text in the Bible in favour of our doctrine, is a full proof of the truth of it. One divine assertion of any doctrine is a sufficient proof. If one be not sufficient, neither is any greater number.

But this is by no means the only text which supports this doctrine. The general current of scripture implies, and many particular texts expressly assert, that the blindness, darkness and unbelief of mankind are wholly of the moral kind, voluntary, and the result of depravity of heart. I shall mention some of them. John. v. 40. *Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.* Ye will not; the original is more explicit and determinate, *οὐ θέλετε, ye are not willing to come to me.* But this unwillingness is assigned by our Lord as the reason of the unbelief of the Jews. And are we not to believe that unbelief in modern times proceeds from the same cause from which it proceeded anciently? II. Thess. ii. 10. *Them that perish, because they received not the LOVE of the truth, that they might be saved.* In other passages the Scripture abundantly teaches that they who believe not, shall perish, shall be damned, are condemned already &c. And this text assigns the reason why

they perish; viz. That they have not *the love of the truth*. But all who are cordially disposed to piety and virtue, or to real obedience to the will of God, do love the truth. Therefore they will not perish, but will believe the gospel and be saved. Again, (verse 12.) *That they might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness*. This text shows, that no man will be damned, unless he have *pleasure in unrighteousness*. But all unbelievers will be damned. The consequence is plain, that all unbelievers have pleasure in unrighteousness. The reason why the heathen world were given over to a reprobate mind, was, that *they did not like to retain God in their knowledge*. And alienation is the only assignable reason, that *when they knew God, they glorified him not as God; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened*. The apostle Peter assigns the same thing, as the reason of the unbelief of the scoffers, who should come in the last days, and should disbelieve the second coming of Christ, *saying, Where is the promise of his coming?* The reason which he assigns, is, a willing ignorance of the agency of God in creation and providence. But to be willingly ignorant of the most remarkable works of God, in which he has most remarkably exhibited himself and his infinitely glorious perfections, argues a spirit of impiety. Now we have received, *not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given us of God*. This text implies,

that if we be under the government of a worldly spirit, we cannot know the gospel, and the truths it contains; and therefore cannot truly believe them. *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.* If therefore any have not the secret of the Lord, as no infidel has, it must be because he does not fear God. I. John ii. 20. *Ye have an unction from the holy One and know all things. But the anointing which ye have received, abideth in you; and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie; and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.* It is manifest, that this anointing or unction means some kind of instruction or teaching. But it cannot mean the common instruction in doctrinal knowledge; because it is said that the former abides in those to whom it is given, and that they need not any further instruction, and that they who enjoy the instruction which is by this anointing, shall abide in Christ. But none of these things can be truly said concerning mere common doctrinal instruction; nor concerning the miraculous teaching of inspiration, which was enjoyed in the days of the apostles. Judas was thus taught; yet he needed further teaching, and he did not abide in Christ. This anointing therefore must mean that teaching, which is by the sanctifying influences of the holy Spirit. They who have this teaching, *know all things*, therefore they will know whether the gospel be a divine revelation: And if any man know not this, it must be through the want of sanctifica-

tion, or an obedient heart. *If ye continue in my word--ye shall know the truth.* These words are of the same import with our text, and very similar in the form of expression. To continue in Christ's word, is to be obedient to him; and such shall know the truth; of course they will know whether the gospel be true. *Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep.* To be the sheep of Christ is to be obedient to his laws and commandments, as the flock is governed by the shepherd: And the reason why the Jews believed not the gospel, was, that they were not obedient to his laws. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do his commandments.* Wisdom, in the language of scripture, always implies a belief of the scriptures. The same is observable of *good understanding*. Those who reject the scriptures or the gospel, are so far from being ever in scripture represented to be possessed of wisdom, or a good understanding, that they are every where called fools, and are said to be *blind, darkened, knowing nothing as they ought.* All those therefore who possess wisdom or a good understanding, believe the scriptures. The source of this wisdom and belief is the fear of the Lord; and the source of infidelity must be the want of that fear. But *that* fear involves a spirit of true piety and virtue, and without it there can be no true piety or virtue. *Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness,*

or as it is rendered in the margin *hardness*, and might be more strictly rendered *callousness*, of *their hearts*. The ignorance and unbelief therefore of mankind with respect to divine subjects is because of the hardness or depravity of their hearts.--*If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God should shine unto them.* Who the God of this world is, is manifest from John, xii. 30. *Now is the judgment of this world: now is the prince of this world cast out.* Chap. xiv. 31. *The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. Against the rulers of the darkness of this world.* The God of this world then is Satan, the great enemy of mankind: and all to whom the gospel is hid, and all who believe it not, are under the influence of the God of this world, blinding their minds; and this blinding influence is the cause why they see not the light of the glorious gospel and believe it not. But this malicious being can have no such blinding influence on any man, only so far as he is depraved, and is under the influence of his depravity. Therefore the whole of that blindness, which induces or implies infidelity, is built on the foundation of depravity of heart. *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.* The light here intended is the light of the gospel; and the reason here given, why men did not love and receive this light, is, that

their deeds were evil. Wherefore it is contained in the scripture, Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious; but unto them which be DISOBEDIENT, the stone which the builders disallowed the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient. Nothing is more evident, than, that disobedience is here represented to be the cause of stumbling at the word. I, John iv. 6. He that knoweth God beareth us; he that is not of God, beareth not us. Hearing the apostles implies a belief of them. Therefore this text asserts, that he that knoweth God, believeth the apostolic doctrine; and that he that knoweth not God, and adhereth not to his cause, believeth not that doctrine; and the former is given as the reason of the latter.

Thus we see how clearly and abundantly the scriptures teach, that infidelity is the effect of a depraved heart and life, and that a spirit of real piety and virtue will forever prevent or abolish it. Therefore,

2. I am to consider how far the voice of reason coincides with the voice of Scripture. If the gospel be a revelation from God, there is doubtless evidence of it. It would be absurd to imagine that God has taken care to give a revelation of his will to mankind, and yet has not

taken care that there should be evidence sufficient to satisfy the rational, the attentive and candid, that it is indeed a revelation. A revelation so circumstanced could answer no purpose of a revelation, nor could it be reasonably expected that it should be received and regarded, at all as a revelation. Nay, in fact it would be no revelation from God to mankind, because it would exhibit nothing as coming from God. If a kind prince should make known his will to his subjects, but in such a manner that there should be no credible evidence that it was his will, as they could not in this case know that it was his will, so they would be just as ignorant of what his will really was, as they were before, or as if the exhibition supposed had come from another prince, or from any other person. If therefore the gospel be from God, and were designed to be received as such, there is undoubtedly evidence that it is from God, such evidence as a rational, attentive and candid inquirer will see: and all who have a spirit of piety and true virtue will be candid and attentive to divine truth, and to every thing which with any probability or plausibility claims to be divine truth; and their candour and attention will be proportioned to their piety and virtue. All such therefore will see the real evidence that the gospel is from God, and will receive it accordingly. And if any see not that evidence, it must be owing to the want of candour and attention, and therefore to the want of piety and virtue.

If it should be said, a man may be induced by prepossession of education, by enthusiasm or blind zeal, to receive a false system for truth, contrary to evidence, or at least without evidence; and that in this case he is not governed by a perverse bias;

I answer, nothing but some perverse bias, some party attachment, some criminal indolence or prepossession, can make a man so enthusiastic, so full of groundless zeal and so attached to the ways and habits of his education, as to be blinded to real evidence exhibited, or to imagine that he sees evidence which has no existence.*

*Whence arises enthusiasm? Not surely from a principle of true virtue and piety. There will be perfect piety and virtue in heaven, but no enthusiasm, no visionaries. And doubtless if a man were completely sanctified in this world, it would preserve or deliver him from all enthusiasm. If so, then enthusiasm will, other things being the same, be diminished in any man in proportion to the degree of his virtue and piety. If honesty, virtue and piety would not preserve all men of common capacities from enthusiasm, then God has laid some men of common capacities under a necessity which depends not on their wills, but is a natural, evincible necessity, of rejecting true religion, and embracing enthusiasm: And then these consequences will follow; that they are under no obligation to be truly religious; that enthusiasm or false religion in them is no sin or fault; that true religion, as opposed to enthusiasm, is as to them no duty; and that enthusiasm in them is as true and genuine religion as any, and consequently is not enthusiasm. On the whole therefore we are obliged to come to this conclusion, that all religious enthusiasm, and all visionary schemes of religion, do and must arise from depravity.

N. B. The note in this page was by the author intended to be printed as part of the text.

Thus, the truth of our doctrine, that if any man be possessed of a proper spirit of piety and true virtue, he shall know whether the gospel be a revelation from God, or a mere human invention, appears not only to be confirmed by scripture, but necessarily to follow from the plainest dictates of reason and common sense.--

If this doctrine be true, and if the gospel be a revelation from God, or a system of truth, all who believe it not are blinded by some perverse bias, or by a depraved heart, and they are not willing to do the will of God. No other reason can be assigned for their unbelief. They may be challenged to assign any other. On the other hand, if the gospel, be not a revelation from God, as there neither is nor can be evidence, that it is from him; all who believe it as from him, are therein actuated by some perverse bias, or by an unwillingness to do the will of God. On this supposition all who have ever believed the gospel, the primitive Christians, the apostles, even Paul himself, who suffered the loss of all things that he might win Christ, either did not at all believe the gospel, and were the vilest impostors, or they believed the gospel from a spirit of disobedience to the divine will. Nay, the same is true of Jesus Christ himself. Either therefore Paul, Peter and John, nay Jesus himself, if they were not designing impostors, believed as they did from a spirit of disobedience to the divine will; or from the same spirit Shaftesbury, Bolingbroke

and Hume believed as they did. There is no medium in this case. And who, it is most likely, were influenced by a spirit of disobedience and impiety, let every one judge, who is acquainted with their respective writings. Let every such person judge, whether a spirit of obedience, or of piety and virtue, breaths most in the writings of Paul, Peter and John, and in the discourses of Jesus Christ; or in the writings of Shaftesbury Bolingbroke and Hume. The first of these last mentioned authors holds, that ridicule is the test of truth. He ironically declares, "that when the supreme civil powers have given their sanction to a religious record or pious writ, it becomes immoral and profane in any one to deny or dispute the divine authority of the least line or syllable contained in it"; and represents the scripture doctrine of rewards and punishments as mean, selfish, mercenary, and hurtful to the interest of virtue. He applies his own avowed test of truth to the scripture, and endeavours to ridicule the spirit of prophecy; and implicitly accuses our Saviour of being actuated by ambition and a persecuting spirit. He places the obligation to virtue in its conduciveness to our present happiness; and seems to erect such a scheme of virtue as is independent on religion and destitute of proper regard to God. Bolingbroke denies a providence extending to individuals; holds that modesty and chastity have no foundation in nature, and are owing to human vanity; that man is no more than a su-

perior animal, whose views are confined to this present life, and has no reasonable prospect of existing in a future state; is not accountable, and has no moral sense or feeling naturally implanted in him; that his supreme end is his own pleasure in this life, &c. The other writer Hume, denies that we can argue the existence of an intelligent cause of all things from the existence of the world; denies that we have any evidence of moral perfection in God, any evidence of a providence, or a future state of rewards and punishment; reckons mortification, selfdenial and humility among the monkish virtues, and pride among the real virtues; denies the distinction between natural endowments or talents, whether mental or corporeal, and moral virtues; and holds that mental capacity, strength of memory, wit, cleanliness and bodily strength are as real virtues as justice, chastity and benevolence. Now, I say let any man of tolerable understanding and candour judge, whether those who embraced and taught such theological and moral principles as these, were most likely to have been blinded to truth by a spirit of impiety and disobedience; or he who delivered the SERMON ON THE MOUNT, and those who wrote the GOSPELS, and other books of the NEW TESTAMENT.--

I have now finished what was proposed from our text; and therefore shall close the discourse with some inferences.

1. Our subject teaches us, that if the gospel be true, there is no necessity that any man be an infidel. Infidelity is not necessary, but voluntary. Men are infidels, because they are willingly ignorant of the truth, and shut their eyes against it. Doubtless all depravity of heart is voluntary; and that, on the supposition that the gospel is true, is the real cause of all infidelity. This is indeed a doctrine grating to the pride of unbelievers; yet it is the doctrine of scripture, and the doctrine of reason too; nor, as has been asserted, can they themselves support any other theory with respect to this subject. They can, on the supposition now made, give no other account of their unbelief, which will bear examination. In vain will any of them pretend to be acted upon mechanically in this case; that what they see, they see, and cannot but see; And what they do not see, they cannot see, and therefore are not to be blamed: that men can no more think alike, than they can look alike. The truth is what they do not see, as to this subject, they might and would see, were it not for the depravity of their hearts; and therefore for that blindness they are most justly to be blamed and condemned.

2. This subject teaches us, not only that no man is under a necessity to *disbelieve* christianity, but that no man is under a necessity to be in *doubt or uncertainty* whether christianity be true or false. There is a plain and sure way to the solution of all such doubts, and every man may

in that way obtain a full satisfaction concerning the truth. If Christianity be true, he may obtain full evidence of it: If it be false, he may obtain full evidence of that. All that is necessary to this, is, that he be *willing to do the will of God*. Therefore to be in a state of uncertainty in this case, to halt between two opinions, is utterly inexcusable; equally so as disobedience itself.

Yet is not this the case with many? They profess to be inquiring whether Christianity be true or not. They are not satisfied; they want further time to weigh the evidence, the arguments in favour of Christianity and the objections against it. But though such men may flatter themselves that they are acting a very rational and commendable part; the truth is, that they betray the wickedness of their hearts, and their unwillingness to do the will of God. For, as on the supposition that Christianity is true, they who positively disbelieve its truth, hereby prove that they are under the influence of a disobedient spirit; so in the case which is now before us, they who are unsettled and halt between the truth and falsehood of Christianity, prove that they are under the influence of the same spirit. Were they disposed to obedience, they would soon come to a determination, and see the evidence which exists, either that Christianity is true, or that it is false.

3. Hence we see the reason why unbelief is

every where in scripture represented as a sin, and is threatened with severe punishment; as it is in such passages as these. *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not, is condemned already; because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God. This is the work of God, that ye believe on him, whom he hath sent. This is his commandment that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.* So in numberless other texts. Now it hath been made an objection to Christianity, that it requires mankind to believe it; that it constantly exhorts to faith as a duty, and dissuades from unbelief as a sin, and condemns it to the severest punishment. It hath been pleaded, that this is absurd; equally so as to condemn and punish a man for not seeing the light of the sun; or to exhort him to believe a theorem in geometry. But this is a gross misrepresentation, unless it be supposed that the man sees not the light of the sun and the truth of the geometrical theorem, because he voluntarily shuts or blinds his eyes against the former, and will not properly attend to the latter. The condemnation of sinners is, *that light is come into the world, and they love darkness rather than light; and that because their deeds are evil.* Surely as a disobedient spirit is sin, and as such to be warned against; so is that unbelief which is the result of it. As an obedient spirit is a duty, and as such is with good reason to be inculcated; so is that faith

which depends on it. As an unwillingness to do the will of God deserves punishment, if any thing doth; so does that unbelief which is the effect of it. These observations are equally true, whether by faith we mean a belief of Christianity, in opposition to deism; or that cordial receiving of Christ, to which the promise of salvation is made.

4. Hence also we learn the true source of all disputes concerning any of the essential doctrines of Christianity. It must be some depraved principle. The same reasoning holds good here, as with regard to Christianity itself. We can no more suppose that God would leave the essential doctrines of a revelation without evidence that they are really doctrines of truth, than that he would leave the revelation in general without such evidence. And if there be such evidence, not to see it must proceed from some depraved principle. No other cause of unbelief in this case can be assigned. I know it hath often been said to be owing to different modes of education, different instruction, associations of ideas and habits of thinking &c, that some christians do not believe all the essential doctrines of Christianity. But if any or all these causes influence them to reject any essential doctrine of Christianity, of the truth of which there is real and sufficient evidence, they must still produce this effect by rendering them uncandid and inattentive to the evidence; and this want of candour and attention is depravity.

If therefore we be duly attentive and candid, we shall see this evidence, shall be established in the belief of the doctrines, and shall surmount our doubts. If our hearts be not established by faith, but be driven about with every *wind of doctrine, and craftiness of men whereby they lie in wait to deceive*; it must be owing to some want of attention or want of candour, or, in the language of the text, to unwillingness *to do the will of God*. And if all professed Christians were free from all depravity of heart, they would be agreed in all the essentials of Christianity.

5. Let us adore the goodness of God, that he hath put the evidence of Christianity and of the essential doctrines of it thus within the reach of every good man. This evidence is within the reach not only of the learned, but of the unlearned; not only of the wise and great men of this world, but of all who are willing to do the will of God. Therefore we have not to inquire, who shall ascend into heaven or descend into the deep, to bring us evidence of the truth of the gospel: But the evidence is nigh us, and will be received by all, if it be not shut out by the depravity of their hearts.--*For if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether it be a mere human invention.*

S E R M O N LXX.

THE CHRISTIAN HOPE.

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Rom. v. 5.

And Hope maketh not ashamed---

Hope is a passion peculiar to a state of probation and trial: There will be no place for it in that future world to which we are hastening. There the faith of the righteous will be swallowed up in vision, and their hope in enjoyment; and there the wicked will be shut out in outer darkness, where light and hope shall never come. But in this present state of imperfection and sufferings, hope is necessary to every probationer for immortality. Were it now secluded from human enjoyment, it would convert mankind into furies, and our world would become as gloomy as the regions of despair. Without this there would be little or nothing, either to stimulate the mind to the discharge of the duties of the present life, or to prepare for a better.

Therefore this passion is kindly implanted in the human mind by the great Creator. And it pervades the whole world. It palpitates in every breast. Methinks there is no affliction so finished, no clouds so dark, as to be impenetrable to its cheering beams. It not only stimulates the victorious warrior, but eases the chains of the dungeon captive. It sweetens the cup of prosperity, and keeps the heart from sinking under the weight of adversity. It enters into the abodes of distress, and cheers the disconsolate with the prospect of days of light, peace and comfort, more than according to the days wherein they have seen affliction.

Though hope animates all, yet all are far from having the same hope. There is an hope that will disappoint its votaries, and terminate in confusion and shame. And there is an hope that *maketh not ashamed*, which will more than answer our expectations, and lead to honor, glory and immortality. Therefore I shall endeavour to illustrate,

I. *The nature of that hope spoken of in the text; and then the excellency of it, as it maketh not ashamed.*

I. We are to illustrate the nature of that hope spoken of in the words before us.

Hope in general, as was observed above, is of universal influence. It operates in an al-

most infinite variety of ways, and takes different denominations, agreeably to the different principles and objects of its operation. That hope which spends itself immediately upon worldly objects, is denominated a worldly hope; and it may be lawful or sinful according to the measure of our dependence upon it.

When we seek the objects of time and sense as the supreme and ultimate *good*, and place our highest expectations of happiness upon them, *this* is a carnal and sinful hope, and involves in its nature the aggravated guilt of downright idolatry. In persons of this description, the love of the world is the predominating principle, and whatever comes in the way of this, they will have the audacity to sacrifice, whether it be the love and the duty which they owe to their Maker, or to their fellow creatures. But even a worldly hope becomes harmless and inoffensive, when exercised in due subordination to higher interests and concerns, and is doubtless allowable. He that cultivates the earth, and casts his seed into the softened ridges, should do both in hope. We may hope for success in all our lawful secular occupations. But these things are not uppermost in the heart and affections of the truly good man. They are not the objects upon which he rests his highest expectations and dependance. He seeks them only as affording sustenance, in this state of passage to higher enjoyments and a more glorious country.

Hope when limited to the sphere of religion is called religious hope. This again is divided into two branches, the hope of the hypocrite, and that of the true Christian. The *former* is reared upon relation to father Abraham, self-righteousness, or some of the rituals of religion, as was that of the Pharisees, and hath no effect in subduing corruption, and purifying the heart: Therefore it must terminate in disappointment and sorrow. But the *latter*, in joys unspeakable and full of glory. The *latter* is spoken of by our apostle, of which only it can be predicated, *that it maketh not ashamed*. This hope hath for its object that weight of glory, that great salvation, which is freely tendered to all in the gospel through Jesus Christ, and which is firmly promised to all that believe in him. It fixes upon the enjoyment of the divine presence and favor, as the supreme and unbounded good of man.--Therefore it is said by St. Peter, that *our hope is in God*; i. e. as the ultimate object of it. Christ is called *our hope*, as it is only by him that the fountain of God's grace and mercy is set open to us, and as he hath not only revealed the great and precious promises of the gospel, the foundation of hope; but rendered them YEA, and AMEN, in his own blood. Had it not been for his interposition, no beam of light or hope had ever dawned upon the human eye.

Further, we are said to *abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost*, as it is by his divine

agency, that this virtue is produced and cherished in the heart. This he does by persuading the mind of the power and faithfulness of God, the sure accomplishment of his promises, and by raising it above anxious doubtings and distracting despair. Thus he administers *strong consolation to them who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before them in the gospel.*

The pillars upon which this grace is supported are, the promises, the immortality, the truth and almighty power of God. Man may betray the trust we repose in him: But God is true, and will neither deceive our faith, nor disappoint our hope. He is almighty, and upon this foundation the apostle built his assurance of hope. *For I know, saith he, whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.* Christian hope always presupposes faith in the divine promises. We cannot rationally hope for any thing in which we do not believe. But we proceed,

II. To illustrate the excellency of this hope, as it maketh not ashamed.

The superior excellencies of it to every other hope will appear from various considerations.

I. From the incomparable excellency of its *objects*. The increase of corn and wine, the en-

joyments and treasures of this perishing world, form the objects of worldly hopes: But the Christian hope hath in view a treasure that endureth unto eternal life; which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which never entered into the mind of man to conceive. Yea, it looks up to the throne of Jehovah, and seeks a place in his favour and love as the *supreme good*. And is there any thing that will bear a comparison with this? Are there any among the angels, or among the sons of the mighty, who may be compared to God? Behold, he looketh unto the sun, and it shineth not! The heavens are not clean in his sight, and angels are chargeable with comparative folly. Is there any worldly honor or inheritance, that will admit of any comparison with being made the sons and heirs of God through Jesus Christ? So exalted and so divine are the objects of our hope. Surely then it maketh not ashamed.

The supereminence of it will also appear, when we contemplate the *stability* of its foundation. How very precarious and uncertain is the foundation of all worldly hopes? Long since this world hath received from the mouth of inspiration that humiliating motto, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity*. And experience shews that the fashion of it passeth away: Therefore all those hopes and joys which rest upon it, must be delusive and transient.

To appearance how well founded were the

hopes of the eastern monarch, who said, *Is not this great Babylon that I have built?* They were founded upon the basis of a mighty and vast empire; and yet, alas, a few days taught him, that their foundation was in the sand. The mighty empires of the world are so far from affording an unfailing foundation to our ambitious hopes, that they are continually subject to change themselves, and must soon be swept away before the hand of time. Many places, which once were honored with the throne of kings and the seat of empire, are now stripped of every vestige of ancient glory, and become places for shepherds to pitch their tents. Thus pass all glories beneath the sun.

Are we buoyed up with the hopes of worldly riches or honor? The *former* rest on a basis which fire may consume, or thieves destroy; and the *latter*, on the breath of popular applause, than which nothing can be more uncertain--an airy foundation indeed! And as certainly as any place their chief dependance upon it, it will break under them like a spider's web, and their towering hopes will fall upon them in overwhelming despair.

But perhaps, my hearers, you are ready to felicitate yourselves, that your highest hopes rest on far different foundations; on a beloved companion, a dear child, perhaps an only son; or a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Alas! these are but a precarious foundation of

hope. Before we are aware, they may fall victims to the last enemy, and leave us to mourn, with Rachel, for our children, or our friends, refusing to be comforted because they are not. But the Christian hope is built upon a foundation which no storms can shake, no length of time can weaken. It cannot be overthrown, either *by life or death, powers or principalities, things present or things to come.* Yea, though heaven and earth shall pass away, this shall endure. This is the only hope that can be our support in a dying hour. In that hour, a well grounded hope is worth ten thousand worlds, and would infinitely more than compensate the toils of a whole age in its acquisition.

But remember, O sinner ! all thy groundless presumptions and worldly hopes shall then leave thee. *The hope of the ungodly shall perish.* You may now be promising yourself, that you have goods laid up in store for many years. But what will all that avail, when thy soul shall be required of thee ? It will serve only to render thy fall into the regions of despair the deeper and the more dreadful. But on the other hand, *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright ; for the end of that man is peace.* He hath that hope in death, which, having cast anchor upon the immortal shore, becomes both sure and stedfast, and enables him not only with a calm fortitude to meet the last enemy, but to hang out the ensigns of victory and triumph ; saying, *O death, where is thy sting ! O grave, where is thy victory !*

The *purifying nature* of the hope of the gospel will also shew that it is a glorious hope, and maketh not ashamed. All the objects of it are pure and holy. Its first and supreme object is, a Being of immaculate purity. *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty.* So heaven, which terminates all our desires, is a region where holiness reigns universal. Nothing that defiles, or that works abomination, shall ever pass through the gates into that city. Now he that is begotten again unto a lively hope of this glorious inheritance, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, must purify himself even as he is pure.

Directly the reverse is the effect of worldly hopes, when they predominate in the heart. How often do we see them breaking over all the restrictions of reason and revelation? The aspiring tyrant, who hath a throne in view, will not hesitate to plunge the fatal dagger into the breasts of all that may stand in his way. Deaf to all the 'calls of humanity, Abimelech slew three score and ten persons of his father's house, upon one stone, that he might be left in the quiet enjoyment of a throne, possessed by usurpation, cruelty and oppression. Far too many instances of this nature might be adduced from sacred and profane history.

And if we turn an eye upon the man given to the love of gain, whose god is the world; what injustice, overreaching, fraud and duplicity mark his steps?

Again, the vile stratagems to accomplish the designs of those who are lovers of pleasure more than of God, are displayed by Solomon in inimitable colors.

Now all these streams of human depravity are powerfully checked and controled by that sacred virtue that is the subject of discourse. Hear what saith the apostle. *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men ; teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ,*

Once more, the hope of the gospel maketh not ashamed, as in fruition it more than answers our most exalted expectations. The desire of happiness is what puts all the hopes of mankind into motion. And as worldly hopes lead deluded mortals to seek for happiness where it never can be found, they always terminate in disappointment and shame. In quest of happiness, king Solomon exhausted all the sources of sublunary joys, whether of an intellectual or fleshly nature. *He gave his heart to search out by wisdom, concerning all things that are done under heaven. He built houses, planted vineyards and orchards, had great possessions, gathered silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces, had men-singers and women-singers, and the delights of the sons of men. He gave an un-*

bounded licence to fleshly desires, and withheld not his heart from any joy. In these broken cisterns he sought for living waters. But alas! he sought the living among the dead. In the review of his follies, in what pathetic terms does he express his disappointment and shame? *Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.* That it should be thus with worldly hopes, when they have our chief dependance, is very obvious; as there is nothing in this visible world that matches the nature of the soul, that can fill its vast capacities, or answer its unbounded desires.

But the hope of the gospel leads to the source and fountain of all good, which corresponds to the nature of the soul, and like it is spiritual, inexhaustible and eternal. Here every desire is answered, and every capacity is filled with joy. Well might the Psalmist say, *In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for ever more.*

I shall now close with a few reflections.

1. As the hope of the gospel is of a purifying nature, it is worthy of observation that in every view personal holiness is secured upon the gospel plan. Christ came into the world to destroy the works of the devil, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar

people, zealous of good works. And until this end of his incarnation be accomplished in the heart, there can be no rational hope of an interest in him. For any to suppose that they may indulge in sin all their days, and yet stand fair candidates for the kingdom of heaven, is a delusion, than which none can be more fatal, with which the god of this world blinds the minds of the children of disobedience. Believe me, sirs; Christ Jesus formed in you is your only hope of glory. Unless you partake of his Spirit, and in your measure display those sublime virtues which shone forth from him like so many sun beams in unclouded glories; unless you are humble, holy, chaste, just, lovers of God and of holiness, your hopes are unfounded, and more dangerous than real despair. They will serve only to strengthen your carnal security, and render your final ruin the more certain and dreadful. However high they may now rise, on whatever supposed experiences they may rest, they will surely break upon you one day in tormenting despair.

2. The animating hopes which are set before us in the gospel, should call forth our Alleluias and praises to redeeming love, through all the ages of time. For a moment let us look back into far distant antiquity, and meditate what was the dreadful condition to which miserable man was reduced by his apostacy from God. Above, was the sword of divine wrath; within, the lashes of a guilty conscience, and darkness and

despair all around. But behold, from the gathering tempest a beam of light breaks in upon his astonished view. *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.* Hence man became a prisoner of hope, who might have remained for ever a prisoner of despair. Is it a pleasant and desirable thing to behold the light? then let our hearts ascend in praises to the fountain from whence it flows.

3. As we are all candidates for the celestial Canaan, and hope finally to go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon, it is our duty to examine our hope, whether it be evangelical. What are its objects? Is it our heart's desire rather to secure the love and friendship of heaven, than the friendship of the world? to appear virtuous and holy in the sight of God, rather than rich, honorable and great in the sight of men? Is it built upon a foundation, which no change of fortune can overthrow? which shall stand secure, when the heavens shall pass away with a noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat? Does our hope work by love, and purify the heart? Does it prompt us to seek for happiness ultimately in him whose favour is life, and whose loving kindness is better than life? Then may we have confidence in Christ, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

4. Let me entreat you earnestly to seek for a
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well grounded, evangelical hope. The great importance of this hope will appear, if we consider, that for the introduction of it among men the Son of God assumed our nature, died for our sins, and rose again for our justification: For the encouragement of it the gates of gospel grace and mercy stand open to us night and day: And upon the acquisition of it our peace of mind essentially depends. May we therefore *seek it as silver, and search for it as for hid treasures.*

Hope, in general, is a most soothing companion in this changing world. Without it no situation in life can be desirable, and with it none can be insupportable. This is one of the mildest of all the passions. Like a gentle stream, it flows in a calm, unruffled course; but when once obstructed, it rises and foams, and spreads ruin and destruction all around. Of all the passions disappointed hope is the most painful. How awful then must be the final catastrophe of the ungodly, when all hope shall be taken away, and succeeded by the blackness of despair for ever and ever. Despair eternal! O fearful and alarming sound! This is a fire that is inextinguishable, and a worm that never dies. Now as we would avoid its tormenting pangs, let us see to it that our hope be that of the gospel, which maketh not ashamed. If we be possessed of *that*, we shall find it a pleasant companion through all the vicissitudes of time. It will attend us in death, and administer a cup of

consolation in that hour, which this world can neither give, nor take away. It will accompany us to the gates of the new Jerusalem, where faith shall be swallowed up in vision, and hope in full enjoyment.

And art thou, O my soul, the subject of this glorious hope! Then great is thy reward. The inventory of thy treasure is what no tongue can describe, no imagination conceive. What is thy petition? and what is thy request? and it shall be granted, to the half of the Redeemer's kingdom: Yea, to the whole of it; for all things are thine; for thou art Christ's, and Christ is God's. Amen.

S E R M O N LXXI.

FAMILY PRAYER.

BY

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Massachusetts.*

Genesis, viii. 21.

And the Lord smelled a sweet savour--

As Noah was one of the best men both in the old world and the new, so it is probable that he made the last family prayer in the old world and the first in the new. For he built the ark of safety for his trembling family before the flood, and the altar of devotion for his joyful family after the flood. As God approved the ark of salvation which was made according to his direction; so he both approved the altar of devotion, and the first family offering which was made upon it. For the great Benefactor and Preserver of men is always pleased to see family worship succeed family danger and salvation.

That building the first altar upon the new world and making burnt offerings upon it were family actions, no one will dispute who candidly and impartially examines the connexion. For immediately upon the exit of Noah and his family from the ark, the inspired historian says, *And Noah built an altar unto the Lord, and took of every clean beast, and every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings upon the altar; AND THE LORD SMELLED A SWEET SAVOUR.* The doctrine therefore obviously contained in the text is this, GOD IS PLEASED WITH FAMILY WORSHIP.

In *this* discourse I shall treat of the duty of family prayer; and in the *next* improve the subject by several inferences. For though family worship is as necessary now as it was in the morning of the world, yet it is by many families, even in a land of gospel light, both neglected and shamefully despised.

I. That family prayer is a duty, is evident from the example of the most devout and religious men in every period of the church. Good men not only love private and public devotion, but they also love family devotion. There is nothing more grateful to religious parents than humbly bending the knee in a social manner before God with their children. For the bonds of the most tender affection impel them to consider their children as members of their own bodies. It is impossible for pious parents to live without praying for their chil-

dren; and as they love to pray for them, they love to pray with them as opportunity presents. What enlightened parents on earth do not love to begin and end every day with family prayer? I am sensible that there are some parents who call themselves Christians, and yet live in the constant neglect of this duty. But I challenge the world to furnish an instance of parents who are uniform examples in other respects, and yet live in the neglect of family prayer. For those parents and heads of families who have been the most shining examples of good works, have also distinguished themselves by their strict and devout attention to family prayer. Family prayer is in fact a leading, principal feature in the face of every distinguished Christian. To dispute this we must discard the most valuable part of church history, and the lives of the best Christians.

Were it necessary in a case so obvious, we have liberty to recur to the example of Noah, who at leaving the ark immediately built an altar for family devotion upon the new world. We have liberty also to mention the pious example of Job, who made a family sacrifice for his sons at the close of their festival, fearing that they had in some instances offended God. We have authority also to improve an example of Joshua. For when he said to the house of Israel; *Choose ye this day whom ye will serve; but as for me and MY HOUSE, we will serve the Lord*; who but the steeled infidel will deny that

Joshua maintained family devotion? David is another bright example. For after spending the day in public solemnities, when *all the people returned every man to his house*, he returned with a devout heart to *blefs his house*. This is a royal example, and is worthy of royal imitation. For the king upon his knees in family prayer is more honourable than the king upon his throne. Like jewels, kings shine the brightest in the dust, at the feet of their Maker. But as it is needless to have recourse to the bible to prove that the sun shines, and that we have liberty to see it, we shall only remark further, that the Saviour of the world, the Father of the most exemplary family that ever lived on earth, not only taught his children to pray always; but frequently called them to join with him in family and social prayer. If, therefore, the example of the most judicious and pious men in every period of the church; if the example of good men under the guidance of the Holy Ghost; if the example of Christ and his holy and devout family, will authorize the practice, the duty of family prayer is obvious. But

II. That family prayer is a duty, is evident from the *neglect* and *contempt* with which it is treated by profligate, wicked men. That profligate men, who are destitute of religion and conviction both, neglect family prayer, is needless to prove; for it is an obvious fact. Wicked men are opposed to family prayer, because it

is a holy exercise, and, like all other religious exercises, affords them no delight. They are to every good work reprobate. The exercises of their hearts are all wrong. They are not only destitute of moral goodness, but they are full of moral evil. Sinners invariably choose what God has forbidden. Like lost men, they always at heart take the wrong way. Hence says the scripture; *They are all gone out of the way--the way of peace they have not known; there is no fear of God before their eyes.* Since therefore there is no moral action which is neither holy nor sinful; since there is no moral medium between virtue and vice, when we see family prayer neglected and despised by profligate men, whose external conduct corresponds with the depravity of their hearts, we are obliged to conclude that family prayer is a duty. For if it were not a duty, such characters would not despise it. It is as certain that wicked men, who act openly according to the dictates of their hearts, will despise every duty, as that good men, while acting in character under the guidance of the divine Spirit, will hate every sin. For the hearts of good and wicked men are diametrically opposed to each other. When we therefore know what a good man, acting in character, approves, we also know what a wicked man disapproves; and when we know what a wicked man loves and esteems, we also know what a good man hates and abhors; consequently ascertain the nature of duty. In proportion to the flagrant neglect with which family prayer,

as well as the Lord's supper, is treated by profligates, we are furnished with incontestible evidence that it is a duty. For those moral actions which wicked men hate, are certainly right; because they hate, every thing that is right, and love every thing that is wrong. In a word, we have just as much evidence that family prayer is a duty, seeing it is neglected by wicked, abandoned characters, as we have that darkness and light, holiness and sin, are opposites. The evidence therefore of this duty is not only a hundred but a thousand fold. But alas! how solemn the thought, and how alarming the consideration, that the duty of family prayer shall be proved and urged upon us in consequence of the neglect of it by thousands, who stand upon the verge of ruin!

III. The *happy fruits and consequences* of family prayer obviously prove that it is a duty. For what food can be given to the hungry, what drink can be given to the thirsty, and what cordial can be administered to those who are faint, better calculated to answer the benevolent purpose of providence, than family prayer is to season on the minds of children and servants, of the old and young, through the house? The happy fruits and effects of family devotion are so numerous and obvious, that the least hint respecting them will authorize the argument. Morning and evening seasons of family devotion are the most profitable and precious seasons which the day presents. By family devo-

tion, properly regulated and conducted, every person in the house is taught to receive the bible, that endless source of heavenly instruction; and by hearing a suitable portion of the scriptures read every day, the memories of the aged are refreshed, and the opening, teachable minds of children are insensibly impressed with divine truths which are necessary to salvation. Family worship is a *domestic Bethel*. It is to publick worship what blossoms are to ripe fruit. Who can teach his children to adopt a suitable form of words in prayer, better than by praying frequently and properly before them? What has a more direct tendency to enforce the necessity and importance of secret prayer, than for the father or minister of the house to pray solemnly and devoutly before his children, night and morning, that the Spirit of God may attend them, not only in the duties of the family, but also in the duties of the closet? When children frequently hear their pious father earnestly beg God to give them new hearts, and to forgive their sins, for the sake of Christ, their tender minds, according to the course of providence, are more or less impressed with the importance of praying for themselves. While the father devoutly addresses the throne of grace in family prayer, he sows the seeds of conviction round his house. There are instances of this nature properly authenticated. Many of the children of God, while relating the course of the divine operations on their consciences and hearts, grateful-

ly refer to the early seasons of family worship.

In addition to these happy consequences of family worship, we have reason to believe that God has frequently answered the family request of parents in the conviction and conversion of their children. For parents are never under more happy advantages to approach the throne of grace, and to intercede with God for their children, than in the time of family worship, when they are kneeling with them before their Maker. If parents ever devote their children to God, they do it in family prayer. For what Christian parent can wait on God in family prayer, encircled with his tender children, and not ardently desire the salvation of their souls? Let the argument, if you please, be impartially examined by praying parents, and I presume their grateful experience will testify, that family prayer is most happily calculated to prepare them to dedicate their children to God, and to train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. For, as previously remarked, those parents who have excelled in family prayer, have also generally excelled in all other parental duties. Praying for faithfulness has a most direct tendency to make parents faithful. For who can sincerely ask God for grace to enable him to train up his children for Christ, and yet flagrantly neglect their precious and immortal souls?

Other lovely effects of family prayer, as it respects children, are obvious even to the public eye. For no children are so seasonably acquainted with the nature, design and extensive advantages of public worship, as those who are acquainted with the solemnities of family worship. The children of a domestic sanctuary early learn how to behave in the house of God, and in what light they ought to view the ministers of the gospel, and the holy ordinances which they administer. For, as in the instance of Noah and his house, family worship is public worship in miniature. Every father is, by the ordination of heaven, the minister of his own house; and ought regularly and uniformly to administer all the domestick ordinances.

In a word, family worship is the nursery of religion, and every season of family worship is the seed time of salvation; and where it is maintained with the most regularity and devotion we reasonably expect the most ripe fruit. For the most flourishing and fruitful trees in the garden of the Lord were taken from the blessed nursery of family worship.

IV. That family prayer is a duty, is evident from the evil consequences which attend the neglect of it. The course of providence is uniform both in the natural and moral world. *That which is done, is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun.* As those men therefore, who neglect to sow and plant, to eat

and drink, to read the bible and hear the gospel, have nothing to expect but a full harvest of bitter and mortal fruits; so those parents, who neglect family worship, expose and even subject themselves and their children to innumerable temptations and evils. Are children taught to read the bible, and to treat it as the word of life, by seeing their parents neglect it? Are children taught to pray always, agreeably to the instructions of Christ, by never hearing their parents pray at all? Are they taught, by the constant neglect of family prayer, the duty of secret and public prayer? In a word, were children ever taught to pray by parents who never pray with them? Will parental neglect inculcate filial duty? It is needless to answer. Hence, as prayerless parents are always unfaithful, it is generally the case that they have thoughtless children, whose minds are destitute of conviction, and whose lives are full of youthful vanities and irregularities, which threaten the destruction of their souls.

These remarks, respecting the evil fruits of neglecting family prayer, by no means imply that all children are regular who attend to the solemnities of family devotion. For there are many who maintain nothing but the *bare form* of family prayer: And there are others, who, tho' they pray in faith, yet, like Eli and David, are unfaithful in some respects, and do not restrain their children. The argument neither supposes that all the children of praying parents are

even the subjects of conviction, nor that all the children of prayerless parents are destitute of religion. For God is a sovereign in the operations of his Spirit: And tho' good Josiah was the son of wicked Amon, and tho' wicked Abiathar was the son of holy David; yet the history of man is full evidence that children are insensibly influenced by the example of their parents. Hence the most thoughtless, the most stupid and vicious part of mankind, are generally the children of parents who have neglected the great duty of family prayer. As family worship, regularly and devoutly performed, is a check upon every youthful extravagance and vice; so the neglect of it opens that door of temptation, which proves fatal to thousands of young persons. Satan loves to reside in those families where he is not disturbed with the solemnity of morning and evening devotion. For his influence with families, as well as with individuals, is always proportionate to the prayerless spirit which obtains. When the adversary has influence sufficient to prevent family prayer, it is easy to prevent secret prayer, and all other religious duties. For that house which is destitute of prayer, is destitute of religion, and full of sin. Though a house of prayer is not free from sin; yet a house which is destitute of prayer, is destitute of religion.

V. That family prayer is a duty, is evident from the nature and design of social duties. As there are duties which pertain to kingdoms,

states and towns, to churches and individuals, so there are duties which, in a peculiar manner, pertain to families. It is evidently the duty of parents and children to live together in the same house, to labor together to promote the interest of the family, to eat and drink together at the same common table, to rejoice together in prosperity, and to mourn together in adversity : And who can reasonably deny that it is their duty to pray together ? For what is the design of social prayer, if part of the same moral whole, if members of the same family, who are all made one by the most interesting and endearing bonds of natural and domestic affection, and by the reception of common benefits and mercies, shall not be one in family prayer ? It is certainly as easy to prove that parents and children ought to pray together in a social manner, as it is to prove that they ought to eat, and drink and live together. For family mercies call for family thanksgiving and praise. But let the reasonableness of family prayer be examined before the following case. Is it not the duty of a father to pray for his child who is dangerously sick, when the child desire the prayer of his father, as well as the prayer of his minister ? The answer is obvious. But shall he pray for his sick child before the family ? or direct the family to leave the chamber ? It is evident in this tender case, that he ought to lift up holy hands before his family. But further, if God graciously hear his prayer, and restore the child to health, shall he, at the grateful request of the child, give thanks before his family ?

Every one is impelled to say, let the father, with the common mouth of his grateful family, give thanks to God, before the solemn circle, for the merciful restoration of the child. This is all natural and easy. But this establishes the duty of family prayer. For this is not only social prayer, but it is family prayer. Thus all religious parents conduct in similar causes. They love to unite with their families in asking God for all needful blessings; and when they receive mercies, either of a spiritual or temporal nature, they love to join with them in giving thanks. This was evidently the practice of Noah. For as soon as he and his family had escaped the universal deluge, which destroyed all the rest of the human race, he built an altar for social worship, and gave thanks to God for his prosperous voyage across the vast and awful deep, from the old world to the new.

To establish the duty of family prayer we have authority to improve every instance of social prayer mentioned in scripture. For if it was proper for Moses, Samuel, Solomon and the prophets to unite with the church and family of God in prayer, for needed mercies and blessings, it is equally proper for parents and children to be socially engaged in addressing the throne of grace. Family worship is as proper in every house, as it is upon a desolate island, where a family is unfortunately lodged. For as the body is one, and hath many members; and all the members of that one body, being many,

are one body, so also is Christ; and so ought parents and children to be in every family. Every house ought to be a BETHEL, every father a private minister, and every family a domestic church.

VI. The duty of family prayer is obvious from the import of several texts of scripture. Men are taught to pray *always, with all prayer and supplication*. But to pray always with all prayer and supplication is not only to pray at all times, but in every state, condition and relation of life. The instruction therefore points at the duty of family prayer, as well as secret and publick prayer. For families, as well as individuals and churches, have common mercies, wants and sins, which loudly call for social gratitude, prayer and confession. Than this, nothing can be more obvious. Hence all prayer includes family prayer. Again, while the apostle inculcates the duty of husbands and wives living together as heirs of the grace of life, he assigns this reason for it, that their *prayer be not hindered*. We therefore conclude, that he urges the necessity of social duties with particular reference to the duty of social and family prayer. For husbands and wives cannot harmonize in family prayer, if they do not harmonize in the particular duties of conjugal life. To pray together as Christians, we must live together as Christians.

S E R M O N LXXII.

FAMILY PRAYER.

BY

SAMUEL SPRING, A. M.

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Massachusetts.*

Genesis, viii. 21.

And the Lord smelled a sweet savour--

I M P R O V E M E N T.

I. If family worship is one of the leading features of the Christian character, we infer that those persons who think themselves Christians, and yet live in the neglect of it, are destitute of religion, and the subjects of strong delusion. For Christ says; *Then are ye my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you; and if ye love me, ye will keep my commandments.* As faith without works is dead, every man's faith is proportionate to his obedience. He therefore who thinks himself a Christian, while he lives in the constant neglect of one of the cardinal duties of the gospel, does but dream about religion. For Christians cordially love and faithfully

practise all the duties of the gospel. For it is obedience to Christ only, which constitutes a Christian. If the course of things were altered and reversed, corrupt trees would bear good fruit, corrupt fountains would afford pure streams, good hearts would bring forth bad things, and Christians would be manifest by the neglect and contempt of duty. But the divine constitution is not reverfible. The laws of the natural and moral worlds are unalterably fixed. Hence, as a good tree always bears good fruit, and as a pure fountain always affords a pure stream; so Christ, the author of nature and all her laws, fays, *A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.* When we therefore fee a man living in the violation of the fixth command, we cannot call him a Christian: When we fee another living in the violation of the eighth command, we cannot call him a Christian: When we fee a third living in the violation of all the laws of the fabbath, charity will not permit us to call him a Christian: And when we fee others neglect and defpife fecret and family prayer, we have no more grounds to think they are Christians, than we have to think they are angels. For by *their fruits*, Christ fays, *ye fhall know them.* The confequence is obvious, that thofe men who efteem themfelves Christians, while they constantly neglect family prayer, which is one of the principal duties of the gospel, are the fubjects of ftrong and dangerous delufion

We ought, in cases of this interesting nature to the souls of men, to let the subject speak its own native language, agreeably to the spirit of inspiration. For guilt will sooner or later sting and pierce the subjects of such fatal delusion. Must we not say that a man is grossly deluded, who thinks himself possessed of shining abilities, when he is raised in the scale of being but just above the level of ideots? Do we not think another deluded, who estimates himself a man of fortune, while he is clothed with the rags and subjected to all the distresses of poverty? When we see another, who values himself upon his superior knowledge, while he is destitute of common information and grossly ignorant, do we not say that he is strangely deluded? And does reason, does Christ, and will the day of judgment, call him a Christian, who lives in the constant neglect of family prayer? No, my friends, he is the subject of delusion: He is the subject of deep and strong delusion; for he believes a lie! and will inevitably be lost, except he speedily repent and beg for mercy. For as a man soweth, so shall he reap. He who sows the seeds of delusion and deception, must reap an answerable harvest. For the judge of all the earth will do right.

II. If family worship is the nursery of religion, which furnishes the garden of the Lord with the most flourishing and fruitful trees, we infer the exceeding great wickedness of parents who neglect it. The best method we can a-

dopt to survey the guilt of men, is to ascertain the evils, as far as possible, which are inseparably connected with their disobedience. The man who commits a fault which injures himself, is guilty of wronging his own soul. He who performs an action which is injurious to others, is proportionably guilty. How exceedingly guilty then are parents who neglect family prayer? For than family devotion, properly regulated, no practice can be adopted which has a more direct tendency to promote the best interest of families, and the highest prosperity of the church. It tends to unite the hearts of parents and children to each other, to invigorate the hearts of those who devoutly pray, and to season and solemnize the minds of all others. In a word since family devotion tends to make good hearts better, and to make bad hearts good; since it tends to build up the church, and the neglect of it tends to destroy the church, and consequently the souls of thousands, it is easy to see that those parents who neglect it, are incomparably guilty. Every one sees that a minister is very guilty indeed, who, by neglecting his duty, is chargeable with the blood of but one soul: And are not parents guilty, who, by neglecting domestic solemnities, train up their children for Satan and destruction, rather than for Christ and heaven? Who, without sublime pleasure, can think of the blessing conferred on children in consequence of the united prayers of devout parents? And who can think of the evils brought upon children

by prayerless parents, without a bleeding, painful heart? But, as the influence of example is powerful and extensive, let us trace it for a moment in reference to posterity. For the subject is the most interesting. According to the course of providence, all those children who are made the subjects of grace, in consequence of family prayer, will be shining examples themselves in the same branch of duty. The next generation will, according to the divine constitution, tread in the same blessed steps, and so on from generation to generation, from generation to generation. For God has promised his mercy to thousands of generations of them that love him and keep his commandments. Abraham was a blessing to Isaac, and Isaac to Jacob, and Jacob to Joseph, and Joseph was a blessing to millions. Agreeably to this gracious course of providence, the family blessing has obviously descended, in many instances, from father to son, even since the days of inspiration were brought to a period. There are instances of pious children, who gratefully repeat the history of their religious parents and grand parents, and even of devout ancestors more remote. As Timothy was the child of the *child* of the CHILD of God; so, to the honour, of divine grace, there are some pious children, even at this day of great delusion, who can modestly and justly speak of the pious line of their families. What religious heart does not glow with delight, to hear a pious child speak of the de-

vout prayers and pious example of his parents and grand parents? For in this connexion we see the blessing descending from the parent to the child. But if we turn the tables, and trace the influence of example, which is set by irreligious, prayerless parents, we shall find it exceedingly fatal, not only to children, but to children's children, unto the third and fourth generation. The history of the family of Ham, Ammon, Moab, Jeroboam, Ahab, and many others, are but lively pictures of the righteous course of providence respecting the families that call not on the name of the Lord. The bible, and even the whole volume of time, is full of instances of the most pernicious and fatal effects of the bad examples of parents. The blindness, the ignorance, the brutality and idolatry, of all the heathen tribes and nations, are but the natural fruits and consequences of the impious examples of the parents of the heathen world. The evil which is brought upon families, tribes, nations, and upon the world, in consequence of the prayerless, irreligious example of parents, is infinite. For many families of children, and not only so, but many nations, are no doubt going rapidly to destruction in consequence of this fatal neglect of their parents. How inexpressibly wicked then are parents, who, though they live in the blaze of the gospel light, see and read the destructive consequences of parental neglect, yet live in the constant neglect of family devotion! Prayerless parents

are not only going to destruction themselves, and carrying their children with them; but they are leading generations of men down to endless burnings. And what must be their doom, who are guilty of the blood of their children and childrens children, whom they are bound to lead, by pious examples, into the path of life? Attend a moment to the solemn consequences of reprobated children rising up in judgment against their parents, and charging them with the loss of their souls! Who can endure the thought of the dreadful scene? But this will, no doubt, be the fact. For, though vain and thoughtless children boast of indulgent parents, because their jovial evenings are not interrupted by family prayer; though they now congratulate each other that they are not perplexed with the authority and influence of strict, religious parents; yet, alas! alas! the day, the dreadful day is coming, when sons and daughters will rise up, and accuse their parents for their indulgence and negligences. For childhood and youth are vanity: And parents cannot adopt a more ready method to ruin the souls of their children, than to set them the prayerless example, and permit them to indulge their vain and forbidden desires. Parents therefore, who do not love the souls of their children now, must expect that their children will hate and despise them in the judgment of the great day. If parents will not bless their children, now in family devotion, they must expect to be cursed by their children at

the bar of God. Let prayerless parents put the question: Are we willing to stand before the tribunal of God in judgment with our children, with whom we never stood in prayer at the throne of grace? Are we willing to hear the voice of our children testifying against us before the Judge of all the earth, because they never heard our voice in family devotion? O prayerless parents! make peace speedily with the consciences of your children in family devotion and every other parental duty. For the time of probation is short, and the great Judge of the quick and the dead is at the door: And you will not only meet the despairing eyes and dreadful reproaches of ruined children; but you must meet the great God, clothed with infinite majesty, to execute the purposes of vindictive justice. Before him you must stand; by him you must be examined and judged, and, without speedy repentance, condemned and banished from all good to all evil. Under the infinite burden of your guilt, and the *infinite, infinite* weight of almighty wrath, you must lie forever and ever. For what evil can you suffer which is greater than the sin of neglecting and despising family prayer? Can thine heart endure, or can thy hand be strong, in the great and terrible day of the Lord? Pray then now, and without fainting, for yourselves and children. For children are the heritage of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is his reward. But

3. The subject shews us that children of devout parents are under singular obligations to devote themselves to God. For they are trained up in the way they should go: They are taught every day to read and consult the bible. Every day they are carried to God, in the arms of prayer, for a blessing; and not only presented with the best example, but with a happy opportunity to anticipate the social enjoyment of heaven. The children of devout and faithful parents are under the best advantages to grow in grace, and ripen for immortal glory: For they live at the threshold of heaven. Though some children of religious parents seldom think of their singular advantages, yet those who love Christ, and realize their privileges, are full of grateful and humble ascriptions to God, that he has given them Christian parents, and cast their lots within the circle of family devotion. The lambs of Christ's flock, who, like Timothy, are from the cradle taught to read the holy scriptures, and the duty of social prayer, tremble at the danger of living in prayerless, graceless families. Their tender, devout hearts frequently bleed, while only thinking of the little heathens who never saw the bible; and also when they see the rudeness and ignorance of other children, who never heard the voice of a parent in prayer. The children of family devotion therefore will never be too thankful, that they were neither born in a family of *rude* nor *CIVILIZED heathens*. For nothing but the mere sovereign grace of

God makes the difference between the advantages of the young heathens, and the advantages of the children of devout, Christian parents. God is not obliged to grant the least privileges to any of the fallen race, because we all deserve his eternal wrath. Since therefore he has not only given some of you all other gospel privileges; but has also given you the privilege of family devotion with your faithful parents, your obligations to love Christ are exceedingly great. The children of praying parents are exalted to heaven in point of privileges. To them much is given, and of them much will be required. Therefore,

4. We infer from the subject, that the prayerless children of devout, praying parents are exceedingly wicked. For though their tender mothers have, hundreds of times, bathed their infant cheeks with the tears of fervent prayer; and though they have been, thousands of times, taught to pray, by devout example, yet they neglect their duty. Children of this description are not only guilty, like others who never heard a family prayer, but they are exceedingly and aggravatedly guilty. For guilt is always more or less aggravated in proportion to the light and advantages which are rejected and abused. It will therefore be more tolerable, in the day of judgment, for the children of the savage, and for the children of Sodom, than for you who are the prayerless children of devout parents. The children of the heathen will rise up against you and condemn you.

And what have such graceless children to expect, but that their tender parents, who have frequently wept over them and prayed for them, will be called, in the day of judgment, to condemn them? Now you refuse to join with them in prayer, though they invite you with bleeding hearts; but then they will refuse to join with you, or even to hear your doleful cries. When distress and anguish shall come upon you, then your praying father and mother will forsake you, and treat you with the deepest abhorrence. No longer then misimprove your opportunity for social prayer with your parents: But arise, O children, and call upon your God, that you perish not. For how, with a prayerless spirit, can you meet your praying parents at the tribunal of God? How can you endure the thought, that all their fervent prayers for the salvation of your souls will only serve to make your damnation the more intolerable? For if you die in your sins, the prayers of your parents, which you now forget, will be remembered with bitterness and anguish in the flames of hell. For praying breath will never be spent in vain. If you will not let the prayers of your parents be answered in your salvation, they must be answered in your destruction. Every prayer will be answered. Pray then for yourselves, and the prayers of your parents will be answered in your salvation: But if you refuse to pray, God will answer their prayers, even in your destruction. For the will of the Lord be done, is the Alpha and Omega of every acceptable prayer. But

V. We infer from the subject our great obligation to pray for the heathens, and all the families in the earth who do not call upon the name of the Lord. How many millions of ignorant, prayerless souls are there in the heathen world! The heathens are as numerous as the sands, and as ignorant of God as the beasts of the field. And shall not Christian parents and children remember them in prayer? Can you hear of the vast multitudes of ignorant Africans, who are every year most wickedly torn from the bosom of their native land, and brought and sold in the common market, and driven about by monsters of cruelty like mere cattle, and not pray for the gospel liberty of their precious souls? As the destruction of the poor is their poverty, so the destruction of the poor blacks is their ignorance. If Africa were blessed with the light of the gospel, the slave-trade must cease. For it is their ignorance which exposes them to the cruelty of the unrighteous part of the informed world. But has not God promised that Christ shall have the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession? And shall we not pray fervently for the glorious period when the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in his wings, and dispel all the moral darkness which broods over the pagan world? What Christian family will not pray for the conversion of pagan parents, that they may pray for their children? Is it not desirable that the thousands of heathen parents shall be enlightened with saving grace,

and see their children become Christians, and flourish like *living* plants round their tables? O God, how long, how long before the present ignorant Ethiopia shall stretch forth her withered hand to Christ the King of glory? Let us then, while attending to the duty and advantage of family prayer, think of the poor blacks in Africa and America, and of all the graceless families of the earth, and pray that their souls may be washed in the blood of the Lamb, and clothed with the garments of salvation. For the time is at hand, and blessed are those families whose fervent, effectual prayers shall hasten it. For they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament for ever and ever.

To conclude, let me ask you, my hearers, whether you maintain family prayer. The question is not, whether you maintain the form of prayer: For tho' prayer, like all other duties, has a form and method, yet God who heareth prayer looketh on the heart, and accepts no man who does not worship him in spirit and in truth. Are your prayers such as God requires, and will approve in the judgment of the great day? If you who are parents, have the spirit of prayer in your families, you have the presence of God, and it is probable, if you pray without fainting, that your children will be blessed: But if you have not the spirit of prayer, you are destitute of the presence of God, and it is probable that your children will be cursed. For when God pours out his wrath upon nations which call not upon his name, he does not spare graceless

families. Like David then, after the public solemnities of the day, let us return and bless our houses. Like Noah, let us this evening make our family offering, and the Lord will smell a sweet savour, and for the sake of Jesus Christ grant us his blessing. For *this is the confidence which we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.*

S E R M O N LXXIII.

ON THE CHANGE of THE SABBATH.

BY

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Heb. x. 24, 25.

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: And so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

THE apostle, having shewn the all-sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ, who by one offering hath perfected forever them that are sanctified, proceeds to observe upon it, that we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. That is, we have free admittance into heaven itself by the blood of Christ. And if so, then surely we may have free liberty, by the same blood, to draw near to God now in the several exercises of religious worship, with a true heart, in full assurance of faith: Especially seeing we have such an high priest over the house of God, (the church) as the Lord Jesus Christ is.

And upon this representation he predicates this exhortation in the text, *Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: And so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

The destruction of the temple and the nation of the Jews were then drawing near; and the apostle here alludes to it, and improves it as an argument to excite them to the greater diligence in attending upon the exercises of Christian worship; lest their neglect in that matter should be a leading step toward their falling away from the Christian faith, and turning back to judaism; in which case they would become sharers in the calamities that were coming upon that people.

We may more particularly here observe,

1. That Christians, in the days of the apostles, practised meeting together for the purpose of religious worship. It was not only their practice, but it was a duty enjoined upon them in our text by an apostolic command.

2. Our liberty of drawing near to God in religious worship is a privilege purchased for us by the blood of Christ; as appears from the connection of the text with the preceding verses, as before observed, and is therefore a privilege highly to be prized.

3. The practice of holding public assemblies for the purpose of performing the several exercises of Christian worship appears very necessary and useful for promoting religion in ourselves and others. For it is by so doing that we are to *provoke one another to love and to good works.*

4. Although it is a very criminal practice to neglect public worship; yet we here see it is nothing new. It was the manner of some in the apostles' days, as well as at this day; which shows how little we regard the great salvation offered in the gospel.

5 We may observe from what follows the text, that a neglect of public worship is a leading step to a most dangerous and fatal apostacy from the Christian faith, and the practice of all true religion. *For (saith the apostle) if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.*

But what I am chiefly to offer from these words will be included under the following heads.

I. I shall show what times of assembling were observed by believers in the apostles' days, to which our text refers.

II. Show the grounds and reasons of these times of assembling which were observed at that day.

III. Show the purposes for which these times of assembling for religious worship were observed.

IV. Show the duty and importance of our continuing in the same practice, together with the danger of neglecting this duty.

I. I shall shew what times of assembling were observed by believers in the apostles' days, to which our text refers.

It is evident that from and continually after the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, the disciples made it their practice to meet together for religious worship upon the first day of the week, which was the day on which Christ arose from the dead. And they not only practised it themselves; but led all the churches which they planted and formed, into the same observation. We find that our Lord, on the day that he rose from the dead, appeared to his disciples. John, xx. 19. *Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And in the 26 verse, we are told, that after eight days, (that is, the first day of*

the *next week*) again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Then *came Jesus*, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, *Peace be unto you.* We read also in Acts, ii. 1. When the day of *Pentecost* was fully come, *they were all with one accord in one place.* The day of Pentecost was, according to the law of Moses, the day after the seventh sabbath from the pass-over, which was therefore the first day of the week. And Christ has put honor upon the first day of the week, not only by rising from the dead upon it; but also by choosing repeatedly to appear to his disciples on that day; on that day to pour down upon his apostles the holy Ghost in his miraculous gifts and powers. And thus the first day of the week became distinguished from other days, and was known among Christians by being called, **THE LORDS DAY.** It was on this day the apostle John received the Revelations. Revel. i. 10- *I was in the Spirit on the LORD'S DAY.* It was on this day the Christians held their religious assemblies for the purpose of gospel-worship. See Acts xx. 7. *And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them.* Although the apostle had been there six days before, yet the disciples did not come together till the first day of the week, which is here represented as the usual time for them to come together to break bread; that is, to receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper.

So likewise we find the apostle gives directi-

on to the church at Corinth, to have a contribution for the poor upon *the first day of the week*; because on that day the church would assemble. And the same orders were given to the churches of Galatia. *Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gathering when I come.*

And to this evidence from the sacred scripture we may also add the testimony of the most ancient writers of the Christian church, who, with one voice, testify that Christians made it their practice to assemble together for the purpose of religious worship, upon the *first day of the week*.

Indeed, we find that the apostle Paul made it his practice to go into the synagogue of the Jews on the sabbath day; that is, the Jewish sabbath; taking that opportunity to preach the gospel to them. But that affords no evidence that he taught such as were converted to the Christian faith to observe any other than the first day of the week as the Christian sabbath. And no other reason can be assigned why or how the first day of the week came to be so universally observed by Christians, as the day of assembling together for the purpose of attending upon the exercises of religious worship, and continually after the days of the apostles, but only the direction of the apos-

ties so to do. All therefore that is necessary to our determining whether the first day of the week is to be observed as the Christian sabbath, is to inquire whether the apostles were vested with sufficient authority for the appointment of this day for that purpose.

II. I shall therefore proceed to show the grounds and reasons of these times of assembling for religious worship, which were observed in the primitive church.

As the observation of the first day of the week as the Christian sabbath principally depends upon the precepts and example of the apostles; I shall essay to show how great the authority was, that Christ vested them with in his church, in a few observations.

I. The apostles were appointed to bear witness for Christ to the world. Christ's appearing in our nature, his holy life, his sufferings, death, resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven, are very important facts, which need to be known, and well attested to the world. And the apostles were well prepared for testifying to the truth and certainty of these things. For they were his constant followers; they saw his miracles by which he proved himself to be the Son of God; they saw his sufferings and death; and he was seen of them forty days after his resurrection. *To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion,*

by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. And they were eye-witnesses of his ascension; for while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. And it was the end for which Christ appointed them, that they should be witnesses to the truth of these things. And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning. And again, at the time of his ascension, Christ tells them, Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

2. The apostles were sent by Christ to publish his gospel, and to set up his church among all nations. This is the command which he gave them when he ascended; *Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.* They were to declare the whole counsel of God, to lay open the way of life, and to preach unto all men repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. They were to make disciples, gather churches, set up gospel-worship in them, and prescribe rules for the regulation and government of the church. And they were fitted and instructed in this work by Christ himself, not only before his sufferings, but also after his resurrection, being seen of them forty days,

speaking unto them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

3. The apostles were further qualified for their work by the infallible guidance of the holy Ghost. Our Lord gave many promises to his apostles, of the influence of the holy Spirit, to furnish them for the work for which he designed them. See John, xiv. 16, 17. *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive.* So also the 26th. verse of that chapter. *But the Comforter, which is the holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.* To the same purpose also in John xvi. 13, 14. *Howbeit, when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: For he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: And he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: For he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.* Now these, and many other such like promises which might be mentioned, which our Lord gave to his apostles, do plainly shew that they were as effectually secured from error, and rendered as infallible in their teaching, guiding and directing mankind, as if Christ himself had been always with them, to tell them what to do, and teach. And as our Lord had given them so many gracious and large promises of the Spirit, after he should depart from them;

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so when he ascended up into heaven, he told them not to proceed upon their work, till these promises should be fulfilled unto them. *And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.* And pursuant to this promise, we find that upon the day of Pentecost this promise was fulfilled by the descending of the holy Spirit upon them, according to the many promises which Christ had given them. When we consider how greatly the world of mankind were interested in the apostles' faithfully discharging the trust, and performing the work which Christ had committed to them; it shows how suitable it was, that they should be thus fitted for it by the gifts of the holy Ghost; who should teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance, which Christ had spoken to them, and should lead them into all truth; that thereby the world might be furnished with a true and infallible account of the way to life by Jesus Christ. How fully then ought the example, as well as the instructions, of such divinely authorized and furnished teachers to be received and observed by mankind?

4. We have also the testimony of God himself set as a seal to the doctrines and instructions of these divine teachers, in the various miracles which God wrought by them. That miraculous power given to the apostles, to work all sorts of miracles, such as restoring the maimed, healing the sick, casting out devils, striking

some dead with a word, and calling others back again to life from the dead, of which various kinds of miracles we have an account of their working; this miraculous power, I say, thus conferred on them, together with power to confer the gifts of the holy Ghost upon others, by the laying on of their hands; are all to be regarded as a divine seal set to their ministry; to lead mankind to reverence, regard and hearken unto them, and receive all things whatsoever they taught, as messengers sent from God upon this design. And that the apostles might, with quicker dispatch and greater clearness and certainty, make disciples among all nations, and teach them to observe all things whatsoever Christ had commanded them, they were, by the descent of the holy Ghost upon them, enabled to speak with other tongues; that is, to speak all languages, of which they had before no knowledge, with equal ease, plainness and exactness, as they could the language in which they had been educated.

Now what greater authority can any one be vested with? Or who can more justly challenge regard and obedience from mankind to all their doctrines, instructions and examples, than persons thus authorised, and thus owned of God? And who can justify or excuse himself in neglecting to regard and obey them? To which agrees the admonition of the apostle in Heb. ii. 3, 4. *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at first began to be spoken by the*

Lord himself, and was afterward confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the holy Ghost, according to his own will.

5. As such divinely authorised persons justly might, so we find they really did, challenge obedience from mankind to their precepts and examples. They required mankind to believe and receive the doctrines which they taught, not as the words of man; but (as they were in truth) the word of God. As they were commissioned by Christ to teach mankind all things whatsoever he had commanded them; and as they were furnished with all such gifts and power by the Spirit, as were needful both to set forth and confirm the great doctrines of the gospel; therefore we find they challenge regard to their doctrines, as being of divine authority. To this purpose are the words of the apostle, *If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write are the commandments of the Lord.* So likewise the apostle John sets forth, that an agreement or disagreement with his doctrines was to be the rule, by which we may judge of truth and error; and obedience or disobedience to his doctrines is the test of a good or a bad man. *We are of God; he that knoweth God beareth us: He that is not of God beareth not us; Hereby know we the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.* Yea, so great stress doth the apostle lay upon this matter, that he makes it a term

of communion to the churches, and requires,
*If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note
ihat man, and have no company with him, that he
may be ashamed.*

And as the apostles insist upon it, that intire
faith and credit should be given to their word
and doctrines; so they likewise propose them-
selves as an example to mankind. To this
purpose are the apostle's words in Philip. iii. 17.
*Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark
them which walk so, as ye have us for an example.*
So again, II. Thess. ii. 15. *Therefore, brethren,
stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been
taught, whether by word or our epistle.* And we
find in a particular instance, that the apostle al-
ledgeth it as a sufficient decision of the case,
that the churches of Christ, formed by the a-
postles, had not been led into such customs. *But
if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such
custom, neither the churches of God.* He com-
mends the Corinthians for their steadily adher-
ing to the traditions he had given them. *Now
I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all
things, and keep the ordinances as I delivered them
to you.* Yea, he declares those customs, into
the observation of which he had led the church-
es, to be of such weight and moment, that he
requires the churches to separate such from
their communion as should walk contrary there
to. *Now we command you, brethren, in the name
of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves
from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not
after the tradition which he received of us.*

Thus we see how great the trust was, which Christ committed to his apostles; of what great consequence it was to mankind that they should fully and faithfully discharge that trust; and also how well and fully Christ furnished them for this work, by the gifts and promised influences of the holy Spirit, and power of working miracles in testimony of their divine mission and doctrines; that so intire credit should be given to all they taught in Christ's name, whether by precept or example. What reverence and regard then is due from us to the doctrines and writings of these messengers of Christ?

There are many other arguments and reasons which might be urged in proof of the truth and divine original of the writings of the apostles, which they delivered to the churches: But from what has been now offered, it appears that these writings carry a sufficient evidence with them, to recommend them to our high esteem and regard, and to set their authority far above all pretenders to the spirit in our days, who bring with them no other evidence of their having the spirit, than only their own bare word.

Indeed, it has been objected by some against the authority of the writings of the apostles, that Paul useth some expressions, which appear as if he himself was doubtful about his having the Spirit to teach him the truth in some particulars. The most plausible text alledged to this purpose, is, I. Cor. vii. 40. where the a-

apostle saith, *I think I have the spirit of God.* In that chapter the apostle is treating of the duty of marriage ; where, from the consideration of the various sufferings to which Christians were exposed in that day, he sums up the matter in this form, *He that marrieth, doth well; and he that marrieth not, doth better.* That is, he leaves them at liberty, that every one might act in that matter discretionally. If they married, they must expect to meet with greater trials in that day of suffering, than if they continued in single life. Therefore he esteemed such as continued single, to be, in that respect, more happy persons; to which he adds, *I think I have the spirit of God.* I think, that is, *I appear to have.* The word *I think*, in the original, signifies, *to prove, or confirm* opinion, as well as *to think* ; and it would be more agreeable to the original, if that sentence had been translated, *I appear to have the spirit of God.* It is evident this must be the meaning of this sentence in this place ; because in this same epistle, Chap. xiv. 37. he asserts, *If any man think himself a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write, are the commandments of the Lord.* And these two places compared together, show it to be a very injudicious interpretation of the first, to take it in such a sense as represents the apostle to be in any doubt whether he had the guidance of the spirit in that matter.

Upon the whole, then, it appears that all

the writings of the apostles are to be received as divinely true, and regarded as the commandments of the Lord ; because therein they teach us, according to their commission, to observe all things whatsoever Christ had commanded them.

And it is especially evident, that what they taught by example is to be regarded, as well as what they taught by precept. We are therein to consider them as acting according to the commandment which they received from Christ. And of how much authority this should be esteemed, with respect to the religious observation of the day upon which Christ arose from the dead, which was the first day of the week, is easily seen. The religious observation of this day, was the uniform practice of the apostles, and the churches under their guidance and inspection.

Inasmuch therefore as the apostles taught the primitive Christians to assemble together for the purpose of religious worship, and led them into the practice of observing the first day of the week, as the set time for these assemblings ; their example herein is a sufficient warrant and foundation for our observing this day as the Christian sabbath. And as the command given us in the text, “not to neglect the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is,” has a manifest reference to these set times of public worship, into the obser-

servation of which the apostles had led the churches; considered in this view, we have as sufficient foundation to act upon in this matter, as we have in many other branches of the duty of Christian life. If there was nothing more to be offered for the religious observation of the first day of the week, as the Christian sabbath, we need be at no loss to find out our duty. If it is an error to observe the first day of the week, as the Christian sabbath, it is what we are led into by following the example of those whom Christ appointed to be the first builders of his church; a practice built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.

There are many other arguments which may be brought in proof of the duty of observing a sabbath, and that the first day of the week is the day to be observed as the sabbath under the gospel dispensation, beside what has been now urged from the example of the apostles; some of these I will mention in the next discourse.

S E R M O N LXXIV.

ON THE CHANGE of THE SABBATH.

BY

MOSES MATHER, D. D.

Pastor of a Church of Christ in Stanford,

Connecticut.

Heb. x. 24, 35.

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: And so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

HAVING, in the foregoing discourse, considered some of the arguments in support of the observing of the first day of the week as the Christian sabbath, which arise from the example of the apostles; I now proceed to support the institution by arguments which may be brought from different sources--

1. The great and wonderful works of God seem plainly to call for this duty from us. The work of creation is a great and a wonderful work, that is worthy of a thankful remem-

brance. And God's taking six days for the performance of it, and resting on the seventh, seems designed to point out, by example, that it is our duty to work six days, and to rest on the seventh. For it was equal with almighty power to have made the world in one day as in six. But as infinite wisdom saw that a seventh part of time was a suitable proportion for the children of men to observe as an holy rest, therefore it seems that God spent six days in the creation of the world, and rested on the seventh, to teach us, by his own example, how much of our time we should keep as an holy rest; all which seems to be expressed in the fourth command. "Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it" holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: *Wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it.* It seems to be one special design of the sabbath at first, that it should be a day of thankful remembrance of the work of creation.

So likewise the deliverance of the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt was a great and remarkable deliverance, worthy of a thankful remembrance. And as it was in thankful remem-

brance of the work of creation that God at first appointed the sabbath ; so his special appointment of a sabbath to the children of Israel was to be in thankful remembrance of their deliverance out of Egypt, as well as of the creation ; as appears from the form in which Moses repeats the fourth command in Dut. v. 12. &c. *Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work ; but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God ; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates ; that thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm : Therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath-day.* Here Moses represents the deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egypt as the reason of their observing the sabbath, even as the fourth command represents the work of creation as a reason of observing the seventh day as the sabbath at first.

[Again, the work of redemption is a much more glorious work than either the work of creation, or the deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egypt, and much more worthy of a thankful remembrance. As God's resting on the seventh day from the work of creation pointed

out which day should be the sabbath, while the special design of it was a commemoration of the work of creation ; and as the day on which the children of Israel came out of Egypt was appointed unto them as the sabbath, while one special design of it was to commemorate that deliverance ; so Christ's finishing the work of redemption, in his rising from the dead on the first day of the week, with equal evidence points out which day of the seven should be the sabbath under the gospel-dispensation, while the more special design of it is to commemorate the work of redemption.

Thus it appears that the great and wonderful works of God call for the observation of a sabbath, and plainly point out the first day of the week as the day for this purpose.

To this it may be objected, that the fourth commandment expressly points out the seventh day as the sabbath ; and that we have no sufficient proof of the change of the day from the seventh to the first.

In answer to this it must be observed, that the abolishing of the seventh day sabbath, and the institution of the first day sabbath, are two distinct things. As to the nature of time, there is nothing in one day more than another, why one day should be kept holy rather than another. And the general law and reason of a sabbath may be binding, and of lasting force,

although the particular set time should be changed. Thus, if the sabbath be changed from the seventh to the first day, this change is not inconsistent with, but as well answers the general law and reason of a sabbath, as if there was no such change.

As to the abolishing of the seventh-day sabbath, I shall mention a few texts. Gal. iv. 10, 11. *Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years; I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.* If we read the whole epistle, we shall see that the danger to which these Christians were exposed, was their submitting to the law of Moses, and taking upon them the observation of the rites and ceremonies of that abolished dispensation. And this evidently shows that the observing of days, and months, and times, and years, which the apostle blames them for, was the Mosaical appointments of sabbatical days, new moons, and sabbatical years. Col. ii. 16, 17. *Let no man judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ.* Here the apostle joins the seventh-day sabbath with the jewish meats and drinks, and declares their sabbaths, as well as their laws about clean and unclean meats, to be a shadow of things to come. And therefore he tells them, that their not observing these days, as well as their not observing these distinctions about meat and drink, was no matter of cen-

lure or condemnation. The apostle again declares the observation of the seventh-day sabbath to be a matter of the same indifference, as to observe the legal distinction between meats clean and unclean, in Rom. xiv. 5, 6: *One man esteemeth one day above another, another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.* It is manifest that in all these texts, the apostle putteth the seventh-day sabbath upon the same footing as the other ceremonies of the legal dispensation were. Consequently, the one can be no more binding upon us under the gospel-dispensation than the other. And therefore the jewish sabbath is as much repealed as the other jewish rites.

I am sensible, these texts have been alledged by some, to shew that no particular day is to be observed under the gospel. But such a sense cannot be put upon them without manifest violence. For it is evident, that in all these places, the apostle is speaking only of the jewish days: For the days spoken of are connected with other jewish rites: Therefore they afford no argument against the Christian sabbath; which day was not called a sabbath at that time, but was distinguished from other

days by being called THE LORD'S DAY. Seeing therefore the jewish sabbath is so expressly abolished in so many sacred texts, and the first-day sabbath so plainly established by the apostolic example, it is a sufficient evidence of the change of the sabbath.

That the day of the sabbath was changed by Moses, when he brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, is very probable. For although it is said, that the seventh day was appointed the sabbath at the creation, and mankind were thereby led to divide their days by seven; yet, as the world fell into idolatry, and lost the knowledge of the true God, so with it they lost the knowledge of the true end and design of the sabbath, which was at first appointed in remembrance of God's making the world. And as mankind fell into idolatry, and worshipped the host of heaven, the sun, moon and stars; so they consecrated the seven days of the week to the several planets and deities which they worshipped; one to the sun, another to the moon, &c.--from whence the names sunday, monday, &c. did originally arise. And as from the beginning mankind were trained up to have a special regard for the day which at first was appointed as the sabbath; so when they fell into idolatry, and consecrated the days of the week to their several deities, it is most reasonable to suppose they consecrated that day, for which they had been taught to have a special regard, to the brightest luminary of the

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heavens, the sun; the next to the moon; and the rest to their other deities, according to their apprehended dignity. And what much strengthens the probability of this opinion, is, that all nations have gone into this practice; and all have pitched upon the same day as sacred to the sun. There is nothing in the course of nature to lead mankind to divide the days by seven; but the declination of the sun, and the changes of the moon, might teach them the division of years and months. There is no reason can be assigned for the unanimous consent of all nations to divide the days by seven, but only tradition, handed down from the beginning, to have a special regard for one day in seven. And therefore they consecrated the day for which they were thus taught to have a special regard, to the brightest of the hosts of heaven, into the worship of which they had fallen, instead of the true God.

Admitting this to be the case, it is evident that the jewish sabbath was not the same day as the original sabbath was, but the day before it. And then it follows, that the change of the sabbath under the gospel, from the seventh to the first day, has brought it to the day of its original institution. For it is the first day of the week as it is now called, which the heathen had consecrated to the sun.

And what strengthens the probability of the change of the sabbath by Moses, when he

brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, is the account we have of their beginning to observe the sabbath, together with the form in which Moses repeats to them the fourth commandment. It was upon the fifteenth day of the third month of that year, according to the common computation, that the children of Israel came out of Egypt. And God ordered Moses, upon that account, to change the beginning of the year, and call it the first month. *Exod. xii.* And we have no account of their observing any sabbath, till they came to the wilderness of Sin, which was upon the fifteenth day of the second month, just a month from their coming out of Egypt. And then the people murmured for want of bread: At which time God began to rain manna for them, and ordered that they should gather it six days; and that on the sixth day they should gather enough for two days; but on the seventh day from that time, and so forward, there should be no manna; but it should be observed as the sabbath. (It seems as if the children of Israel, in the time of their bondage in Egypt, which lasted one or two hundred years, had, in a manner, lost the knowledge of the sabbath, and did not observe any till it was renewed by Moses at this time.) And if they numbered their months by weeks, that is four weeks to a month, which it is most probable they did, (which occasioned them to have an intercalary month in their years) then the twenty second day of the month, which is the first sabbath they observed,

that we have any account of, shews, that the day which they observed as the sabbath, was the day upon which they came forth out of the land of Egypt. So that, as the beginning of the year, so was also the day of their sabbath, changed in remembrance of that deliverance. To which agrees that form in which Moses repeats the fourth command in Deut. v. which is, that because God had redeemed them out of the land of Egypt, therefore he commanded them to keep the sabbath day.

From the things which have been mentioned, it appears highly probable, that as the beginning of the year was changed upon this account; so also was the day of their sabbath; that by the observation of their sabbath they might, not only be reminded of their deliverance out of Egypt, and their being taken to be the covenant-people of God; but also might be thereby further guarded, separated and distinguished from the heathen nations. This would be a means to preserve them from falling into idolatry, a vice to which the children of Israel were very much addicted.

Although the reasons mentioned do not amount to a full proof that the sabbath was changed by Moses; yet they render it highly probable; and therefore quite uncertain which day was the original sabbath; whether it was the Jewish sabbath, or the Christian sabbath. But as the greatest probability lies on the side

of its being changed, therefore we have good reason to suppose the first day of the week, which is the Christian sabbath, is the same day of the seven as was appointed at first to be observed as a sabbath.

2. There are some strong intimations that the day of the sabbath should be changed under the gospel-dispensation in the prophecies of the old testament. Particularly, Psalm. xcv. 7. *To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.* This passage will appear a plain intimation of the change of the sabbath, if we attend to the explanation of it, given by an inspired apostle, in Heb. iv. 4, 5, 7, 8, 9. *For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest.--Again he limiteth a certain day, saying to David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day, if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts.* For if Jesus (Joshua) had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. *There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God; or, as it is rendered in the margin, a keeping of a sabbath to the people of God.* A sabbath is intended, not only in remembrance of the great works of God, from which it takes its rise; but also as a pledge of a better rest. The apostle is here proving that there is a heavenly rest to be entered into, in the future state, by the people of God. And as a pledge of it, he here saith, *there remaineth a keeping of a sab-*

bath to the people of God. And this, he saith, is another day, than that which was the sabbath in David's time.

Another intimation of the change of the sabbath we have in Psalm cxviii. 22, 23, 24. *The stone which the builders refused, is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.* That this is a prophecy concerning Christ is evident from many places in the new testament, where it is applied to him. And it is here foretold, that the day when Christ became the head stone of the corner, is the day which the Lord hath made. The day which the Lord hath made signifies the day that he hath consecrated, or set apart. And it is equally evident, that it was by Christ's rising from the dead, that he became the head stone of the corner; that is, the foundation of his church. This is a day to be observed with joy and gladness; *We will rejoice and be glad in it;* which properly describes the business of a sabbath, which is a day of religious joy and gladness. Here the grand event which was to be the occasion of the change of the sabbath, is pointed out; and the day on which this event should take place, is the day which the Lord hath made to be remembered with religious joy and gladness.

3. The authority of Christ over the sabbath,

his putting special honour upon the first day of the week; and appropriating it to himself as his day by way of distinction from other days, strongly evidenceth the duty of observing this day holy to the Lord. All power in heaven and in earth is committed to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is made head over all things to his church, whose authority therefore to prescribe a sabbath to his people is indisputable. He is vested with sufficient authority to abolish the seventh-day sabbath, and appoint another day; which power our Lord asserts, Luke, vi. 5. *And he said unto them, that the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath day.* And we accordingly find, He has put his name upon another day, Rev. i. 10. *I was in the spirit on the Lord's day.* Which is a title by which the first day of the week was then and has been ever since known. Christ has put special honor upon this day, not only by putting his name upon it; but also because on it he arose from the dead; and on this day he repeatedly manifested himself to his disciples after his resurrection from the dead; and upon this day, in a most wonderful manner, sent to his disciples the promise of the Father, in the plentiful effusion of the holy Spirit; upon which account we have reason to say, This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

Now the evidence of the change of the sabbath, which has been exhibited, shows that the

church of Christ has not acted without sufficient reason, in observing the first day of the week as the sabbath under the gospel-dispensation. This has been the practice of the church from the apostles' days to this time. Such therefore who deny that the apostles established the observation of the first day of the week as the sabbath, ought in all reason to shew how, and when the change of the sabbath was made in the church. Surely such a change of the sabbath from the seventh day to the first could never be brought about, and introduced into all the churches, in such a still and silent manner, as not to be taken notice of by any of the Christian writers in all ages of the church. If one or two churches had corrupted themselves in this matter, yet surely some would have continued faithful, to bear testimony against such corruption. But that all the churches, in all parts of the world, should agree in such a change, and should bring it about without raising any dispute, is a supposition so extravagant as to be altogether ridiculous.

But some say (because they can say nothing better) that this change of the sabbath was brought about by the authority of the Pope. And all they can offer in proof of this assertion is, that they find the first day of the week mentioned among the days prescribed by popish decrees, to be observed by the church. But if the first day of the week had been observed from the beginning, it must of course be included

in the number of days prescribed by popish decrees : So that this is no evidence at all in the case. But if the change of the day was made by the authority of the Pope, in popish countries, how came it to take place in other parts of the world, where the pope's authority never extended ?

But to ascribe the change of the day to the authority of the pope, is dating the matter a great deal too late ; because Christian writers plentifully declare the observation of the first day of the week long before the pope of Rome was called the head, or universal bishop of the church ; or even before the popish corruption had arisen to any considerable height in the world. Add to this, the first day of the week has had the sanction of civil authority, as the sabbath, ever since the civil rulers embraced the Christian faith. Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, put the sanction of civil authority upon this day. And it has ever since, in all Christian countries, had the sanction of civil powers, as the sabbath.

III. Proceed we now, agreeably to our THIRDPROPOSITION, to show the purposes for which these seasons of public worship are to be observed.

The name SABBATH signifies a rest. It therefore requires that we rest, or cease from labor, and the ordinary employments of this life. In the fourth command we are requir-

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ed, *Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work ; but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God ; in it thou shalt not do any work.* We are to lay aside all our worldly concerns, and free our minds, as well as our hands, from the employments of this life. Much more then ought we to cease from pleasures and diversions. If we observe the day, we must observe it to the Lord. The sabbath is a day set apart for religious purposes, and ought to be spent in the public and private exercises of God's worship.

1. The sabbath is to be observed as a day of thanksgiving. This was one design of the appointment of the sabbath at first, that it should be a memorial of the work of creation. That great work of God, by which he gave being to the world, and to all things in it, and framed all things in their beauty, order and usefulness, justly challengeth our gratitude to the author of all being and blessedness. Therefore when God had finished the work of creation in six days, he rested on the seventh, and hallowed it as a day holy to himself, that it might be observed by the children of men as a thankful memorial of that great work.

This also was manifestly one design of the sabbath, as it was appointed to the children of Israel, that it should be observed as a day of thanksgiving ; that it should be unto them, not only as a memorial of the work of creation ;

but also of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. This seems plain from the words, Deut. v. 15. *And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath-day.*

The same view of the sabbath, as a day of thanksgiving, is still to be retained under the gospel. The work of redemption by Jesus Christ is a very great and glorious work, far exceeding in glory the work of creation, and the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt; and is therefore much more worthy of our most thankful remembrance. As the day of the sabbath seems to have been changed by Moses from that day which was the seventh from the creation, and fixed upon that day on which the children of Israel came out of Egypt, that it might be to them a day of thanksgiving in commemoration of that deliverance; so the change of the day, under the gospel dispensation, from that which was observed by the church of the Jews, to that on which our Saviour finished his sufferings, in his rising from the dead, intimates to us, that the more special design of the sabbath is to be a day of thanksgiving for the work of redemption.

Hence then it is one part of duty on the sabbath to survey these glorious works of God

in creation, providence and grace ; especially the glorious work of redemption by Jesus Christ, in all its parts ; and so to view and meditate upon these things, as that our hearts may be affected with a sense of the glory of God, and a grateful frame enkindled in us to the author of our being, and fountain of all our comforts.

2. The sabbath is to be observed as a memorial of our obligation and covenant relation to God. The appointment of a sabbath at first, in remembrance of the work of creation, was to admonish mankind that God was the author of their being, and remind them of their obligation to him as such. And had mankind been careful to remember the sabbath day and keep it holy, according to the manifest intention of its appointment, it would have had a direct tendency to have preserved the knowledge of the true God and of their obligation to him, and would have been a special means to have preserved them from idolatry. So likewise the appointment of a sabbath to the children of Israel was to serve as a memorial of their covenant-relation and obligations to the true God ; as is expressly declared, *Exod. xxxi. 13. Verily my sabbath shall ye keep : For it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations ; that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.* The sabbath under the gospel is also to serve the same special purpose. It is to be regarded as a sign of the covenant between God and us.

It is appointed as a memorial of that great work of redemption, in which Christ hath purchased us to himself, and redeemed us to God with the price of his own blood. It becomes us therefore to keep the sabbath day in thankful remembrance of that glorious work; that a return of the sabbath may revive in our minds a solemn remembrance of the price of our redemption, and the sacred bonds of the covenant of our God which are upon us.

3: Another purpose of the appointment of the sabbath is, that it should be the set time for us to attend upon, and unite in, the several exercises of public worship. It is expressly required of us in the text, “not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together.” It is a matter of public honour due to God, and an open acknowledgement of Christ as our Saviour; that his people should assemble themselves together on that day, on which the Lord has recorded his name, to pay their joint honour to him, attend upon his institutions, and the several parts of his worship. It was to this purpose the children of Israel were commanded to keep the sabbath day. Upon this day they were required to have an *holy convocation*. And we find that their practice was according to this precept. For to this end they built their synagogues, or houses of public worship, where they resorted on their sabbaths for religious purposes, as is mentioned, Acts, xv. 21. *For Moses of old time bath in every city, them that*

preach him ; being read in the synagogues every sabbath day. And it has been already shown, that the gospel-sabbath, the first day of the week, was observed by the apostles and first Christian Churches as the day to assemble for the purpose of public worship. We ought therefore to esteem the sabbath, not as a day to be spent in sloth and idleness at home ; but as a day on which we are to assemble with the people of God, to unite in the several exercises of gospel-worship.

4. Another design of the sabbath is, to be a sign and pledge to the people of God of everlasting rest in the future state. Whatever may be said of the sabbath appointed to Adam in paradise, as to its being a pledge of an heavenly rest, this was evidently the case of the sabbath appointed to the children of Israel. The covenant God made with that people included a promise of a temporal rest in the land of Canaan, as well as a future rest in heaven. And as the sabbath was to be to them a memorial of that covenant, so it was likewise a pledge of the blessings promised in it, provided they were obedient to it. Hence the prophet Isaiah urged the sanctification of the sabbath as a method to secure the continuance of God's protection over them in the land which he had given as an heritage to Jacob. Isa. lviii. 13, 14. *If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the*

Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob, thy father: For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

So likewise the sabbath under the gospel is a sign and pledge to true believers of everlasting rest in the future state. Thus the apostle points out the sabbath, in all the appointments of it, as a sign and pledge of future and heavenly rest, in Heb, iv. In this chapter he refers to the original sabbath at the creation of the world, to the sabbath of the Jews, and to the Christian sabbath; shewing that they all were to be considered as pointing to, or pledges of, a future heavenly rest.

IV. It remains to shew the duty and importance of our keeping holy to God the Christian or first day sabbath; together with the danger of neglecting it.

The several purposes which have been mentioned, for which the keeping a sabbath has been enjoined upon mankind, may be considered as so many arguments to enforce the practice of this duty upon us.

Creating goodness, providential mercies, and above all the glorious displays of re-

deeming grace by Jesus Christ, lay us under strong obligations, in point of gratitude, to practise this duty. This is the appointed way for us to express our thankfulness to God for all his benefits towards us. How criminal then, how base, and how ungrateful must it be in us, to treat the sabbath, or the sacred privilege of God's worship, on that day to be attended, with carelessness and neglect! And as it is very base and criminal in us, so it must be very offensive and provoking in the sight of God.

Or if we view the sabbath as a sign and token of our covenant relation to, and interest in God, our treating of it with carelessness and neglect must appear to be a breach of covenant, a practical renouncing of our covenant-interest in God, and a forfeiture of all covenant-privileges and blessings. Or on the other hand; if we desire to secure to ourselves a covenant-interest in God, or the privileges and blessings of the covenant, a due sanctification of the sabbath must be carefully attended to.

When we likewise consider the sabbath as the appointed time to attend and unite in the several exercises of public worship, our obligations to carefully observe it, will appear in a strong light. Christ has set up his church as his visible kingdom among men; has required us to join ourselves to it; has appointed various exercises of religious worship, by which he

performs the part of a Mediator among men, to bring them to be reconciled to God; and by which he imparts to them the influence of the holy Spirit and blessings of redeeming grace, and makes them partakers of his saving fulness. That we are to view the religious exercises prescribed to the church, as that by which the Lord Jesus Christ, in his mediatorial office, applies to mankind, to reconcile them to God, is evident from the apostle's representation of a preached gospel, which is one of these religious exercises. II. Cor. v. 20. *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* If therefore we disregard the sabbath, and turn our back upon the public exercises of gospel worship, we therein turn our back upon Christ, and thrust ourselves away from his mediation. And if, by such conduct, we will not suffer Christ to apply his mediation to us in his church in this world, we cannot expect he will apply to God for us, as our advocate with the Father. For this is what he hath assured us in this case. *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.* And if we exclude ourselves from the mediation of Christ, what is there remaining for us to hope in?

A due sanctification of the sabbath will have

a great influence upon us, and an happy tendency to promote the practice of religion in the various parts of it. But decays in religion, and even a total apostacy from the Christian faith, commonly begin by slackness, carelessness and negligence in sanctifying the sabbath, and treating the public exercises of God's worship with coldness and indifference. But if we mean to receive real benefit from the sabbath and sabbath-privileges, we must not content ourselves with an outward attendance upon them; but must take heed to draw near to God in them with a true heart.

The sanctification of the sabbath is not only the way to promote religion in ourselves, but also in our fellow men. The upholding public worship among a people has a tendency to call their attention to divine things, to spread the knowledge of the gospel, and to enlarge and advance the kingdom of the Redeemer, in the conversion of sinners, and the edification of believers. How powerfully then do all these considerations enforce the practice of this duty upon us? I shall therefore close my subject, by repeating the exhortation in the text. *Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: And so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

S E R M O N LXXV.

CHRIST the WAY, and the TRUTH,
and the LIFE.

BY

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John, xiv. 6.

JESUS saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: No man cometh unto the FATHER but by me.

THE whole design of religion is to point out the road to real happiness, and to put mankind in possession of it; to engage them to a life of piety and morality in this world, and to train them up for a fulness of glory and perfection of peace in that which is to come. Viewed in its true light therefore, separated from all abuses, superstition on the one hand, and enthusiasm on the other, it has the most benign influence on the welfare of civil society, and is the most promotive of the best interest of the human race. The evils which have

flowed from a persecuting spirit, and the wars commenced, and the blood shed by nations in religious quarrels are not the native effect, but the horrid abuses of religion. The best things on earth are liable to be perverted by the corrupt passions and ignorance of man. The candid mind of philosophy, that forms a just estimate of human life, when contemplating moral subjects, will attribute the evils which it beholds to the true cause. So far is the spirit of true religion from being a disadvantage to, or increasing the miseries of, society, as some superficial, half-thinking men have affirmed, that its whole system of duties and doctrines directly tends, and is wisely calculated, to mitigate every wo, to soften every sorrow, to inspire every rational joy, and to diffuse over the world humanity and benevolence; to purify and refine, to ennoble and exalt human nature and human happiness. Consequently, one of the most interesting questions which can be proposed on the subject of religion, is, how shall we secure to ourselves its blessings? or what is the way for us acceptably to serve God in time, and to be fitted for the enjoyment of him in eternity? This grand question is satisfactorily answered by our Saviour in the words now read. *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: No man cometh unto the Father but by me.*

He begins his discourse with his disciples, by consoling their hearts with the thoughts and

hopes of heaven. *Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way? Then come in the words of the text. Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: No man cometh unto the FATHER but by ME.*

I. It is proposed, in the sequel, to show how Christ is the way, and the truth, and the life. And,

II. To point out the impossibility of our obtaining acceptance with God but by him.

I. In what respect our Saviour is the way, the truth, and the life is what is intended, first, to be considered and illustrated.

He declares to his disciples in general, and to Thomas in particular, that he is the way to happiness for all mankind. For he must be the way, and the truth, and the life to one as much as to another; because all the world equally need his guidance, instruction and atonement. His gospel is as necessary for one as for another, and no man can obtain the favour of God, or reach the peaceful abodes of

a blessed immortality, but by him. When Christ says he is the way, how are we to understand him? What ideas does he intend to convey to his disciples of himself? **I AM THE WAY.**

He is the way of access to God in prayer and other acts of homage,--of pardon for the guilty,--of justification and peace with God,--of the expiation of sin,--and of happiness.

He is the way of access to God in prayer and other acts of homage. We can acceptably serve God only through the mediation and intercession of his Son. As fallen creatures, we are in ourselves utterly unworthy to approach the divine throne, or to come before a holy and sin-hating God. He is of purer eyes than to behold sin, or the sinner, but with detestation. He hates with perfect abhorrence all the workers of iniquity. His wrath, indeed, is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. No act, either of impiety or injustice, can be concealed from his knowledge, or escape his resentment. An innocent and perfectly holy creature, who had never lost his rectitude, or offended his Creator, would in his own name directly address himself, without any Mediator, to the all-wise and sovereign Lord of nature. But a fallen and guilty creature, who has lost the favour and offended the Majesty of heaven and earth by innumerable sins, cannot draw near to him in

his own name. He, on the other hand, is altogether unworthy so much as to lift his voice to the eternal throne for mercy, and can have no assurance of a gracious audience and acceptance.

The anxious inquiry of conscience is, *Where with shall I come before the Lord, or bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand of rivers of oil? shall I give my first born for my transgression? the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*

This anxious inquiry may be satisfactorily answered. All such expensive and painful expedients are utterly unavailable. Jesus Christ is the appointed medium of worship, is the only way of access to the FATHER. In him our prayers, our praises, our gratitude, and confession of sin may be accepted. He is all-worthy, though we be infinitely unworthy. With him the Father is ever well-pleased, though he cannot look upon us out of him, but with abhorrence. His merits are infinite, and his intercessions all-powerful. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man. He is the only medium of access to HIM who is the hearer of prayer, and fountain of grace. No other is appointed or permitted. Our persons and services, our

thanksgivings, and all our religious duties and ordinary conduct can be acceptable only in the name of Christ. *And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. Our Lord graciously promises all his followers, that the Father will always hear them in his name, and bestow upon them every needed blessing. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*

And there is an absolute promise that all our prayers, which flow from faith as the principle, which are aimed at the divine glory as the end, and which are guided by the word as the rule, shall be answered. *Therefore I say unto you. what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them:* He ever acts in the capacity of an intercessor at the the right hand of the Majesty on high. *And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it, with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar, which was before the throne.* All our religious duties, prayer, praise and other acts of homage can ascend to the throne of the universe with acceptance only in the name of Christ. He is, then, the way of access to the Father, and no man can come unto God but by him. *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath con-*

secrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh. And having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

2. Jesus Christ is also the way of pardon for the guilty. The very idea of pardon always presupposes guilt. An innocent being needs no forgiveness. He who has never offended in thought, word, or deed, can have no guilt to be washed away by a pardon. But sinful creatures stand in perishing need of a remission of all their transgressions. And this can be had only in the Mediator. We have no merit of our own to purchase the forgiveness of sin. Though, as transgressors, we stand in absolute need of a pardon, tho' we must finally and forever perish without it; yet we cannot have it from ourselves. Can we rely on our own good deeds, on our own virtues for pardon, or on the justice of the Deity, or the mere clemency of his nature? Some have carried their notions of human merit so high, as to take to it alone for introduction to the favour of God, and admission into glory, when they shall bid adieu to this mortal scene. I remember to have heard, that a very noted infidel of our own country was wont to express himself with regard to acceptance with his Maker, on this wise; "I would rather, says he, loose heaven, and incur damnation; I would rather miss of the

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“favor of the Deity, than not merit it by my
 “own virtues. If my dignity, if my merit
 “will not procure for me a seat in the mansions
 “of blifs, then farewell happiness. I will ac-
 “cept of happiness only as the fruit of my own
 “good deeds.” The humble Christian shudders at
 such language and sentiments. He feels his
 utter unworthiness of eternal life, or a pardon.
 He has no merit to plead; no virtue of which
 to boast. The more he sees of the spotless pu-
 rity of the divine nature, and unlimited extent
 of the divine law, the lower is his opinion of
 the pretended merit of man. He feels that
 nothing he ever has done, or ever can do, can
 procure the forgiving pity of God. Not on
 works, but grace, doth he rely. If his ini-
 quities were to be strictly marked against him,
 he is conscious he could not answer for one
 in a thousand of them, and therefore pleads
 that God would not enter into judgment with
 him; for in his sight no flesh living could be just-
 ified. He feels that Christ is the way of pardon.
*In whom we have redemption through his blood, e-
 ven the forgiveness of sins.* Through his blood all
 our transgressions may be done away, so that
 they shall neither rise up in this world to our
 shame and confusion of face, nor in the world
 to come to our utter and final condemnation.

How ardently do good men desire to be
 freed from the guilt of sin, and penalty of a
 righteous, but violated law. *Have mercy on me,
 O Lord, according to thy loving-kindness; accor-*

ding to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions ; wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Again, in the words of the same pious saint, who was deeply affected with a sight and sense of the number and heinousness of his sins. *Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.* All who are burdened with a sense of the number and greatness of their follies and sins, cannot but prize forgiveness from a holy God. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.*

3. Further, our Saviour is the way likewise of justification and peace with God. Our justification before God is a point peculiarly interesting to all mankind, and equally concerns all of every age and condition. It consists of two parts, acquittance from guilt, and a title to life. It is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are liberated from the penalty of a broken law, and accepted as righteous in his sight, only on account of the righteousness of a Mediator. When a sinner is convinced of his sin, of his lost and undone condition by nature, and is brought to believe in the mediation, and to accept of the atonement of the Son of God, according to the covenant of grace, or method of life constituted in the gospel, a justifying act is passed upon him by his Maker in heaven ; he is declared to belong to his kingdom, and no longer liable to bear the penalty of a broken law.

Justification literally signifies judging one to be just. A man is said to justify himself, when he asserts his innocence, or denies that he has been to blame in any instance. We justify another, when we appear on his behalf, and undertake his vindication. Among the Jews, this was a law-pharse, or was used in reference to their courts of justice. *If there be a controversy between men, and they come into judgment that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.* The word justify was borrowed from courts of justice, and applied to the case of mankind in regard to the sentence of the supreme Judge; and in order to have its primary meaning duly preserved, when used with respect to the justification of fallen man before a holy and just God, it must imply an acquittance from sin, as exposing to eternal death, and the grant of a sure title to everlasting life. And we are justified in the name, as well as pardoned through the blood, of Jesus Christ. As we are sanctified by his Spirit, so we are justified by his righteousness. Pardon, justification, sanctification, and peace with God all go together. These invaluable blessings all flow to us, as well as every other favour, whether temporal or spiritual, through a Mediator. *And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.* Here justification and sanctification are spoken of as coming to us in the name of a Redeemer. St. Paul is most full and clear

on this great subject, that Christ is the way of justification. *Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.* That Christ is the way of justification and acceptance with God is most clearly expressed in the following words. *Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.*

We have peace as well as justification by him. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the way of peace, as he is our peace-maker; as he reconciles us to God; as he appeases the divine anger towards us; and gives us his own peace. *For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.* He preaches the doctrines of peace. He opens the counsels of eternal peace. By him we have peace and joy in believing. *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.* He is the way of justification, acceptance and peace with God, as it is by him all these rich and invaluable blessings come to us. In him our persons are justified, our ser-

vices accepted, and our peace established. He is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

4. Again, our Saviour is the way of the expiation of sin: Sin must be expiated, or favour can never be extended, with consistence, to the transgressor. It is of so odious and vile a nature, and so ruinous in its consequences, that the sinner can never be liberated from its guilt, till full and ample satisfaction be made to the justice and holiness of God. The rights of the Godhead must be secured. As the ruler of the universe, he must see that virtue is countenanced through all his extensive dominions; that vice is frowned upon; that his laws and government are maintained; and that rebellion is effectually discouraged. For him, in his rectoral character, to do any thing by which it might appear to the intelligent creation that he did not hate iniquity and love righteousness to an infinite degree, would be an injury to the public good, the glory of the universe. We may fairly conclude, therefore, that he will take the wisest and best possible measures to convince the intellectual system, that none can insult his government, oppose his authority, or trample under foot his laws, with impunity. As the sovereign Lord of nature, he is the revenger of evil; and his clemency can never be exercised, in any case whatever, in a manner which is incompatible with the rights of justice. But when his law, which is holy, just and good, is magnified, and

made honourable ; when the awful dignity of his government is fully vindicated ; when the infinite glories of his character are most signally displayed, and his sacred authority openly manifested, then sin is expiated, a pardon may be extended, and a holy God left at liberty to save and bless. By the blood of a crucified Saviour, the law, character, perfection, government and authority of the Deity are all vindicated and honoured ; and consequently sin is expiated. All is done that was requisite to be done in order for mercy divine to flow down upon a guilty world. When John the forerunner of Christ saw him, he speaks of him as the expiation of sin in the following manner, pointing his disciples to him : *The next day, John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.* How did he take it away? Not by expelling it from the system ; for we still behold its ravages in the moral world. Not by changing its nature ; for its nature is always the same ; and its inherent turpitude can never be diminished, and our Lord's sufferings, manifold and exquisite, as they were, altered not the nature of things ; but he *took away the sin of the world* by making an atonement, or doing what laid a sufficient foundation for God, in the character of the righteous Lord of heaven and earth, to extend pardon, peace and salvation, in a manner compatible with the sacred claims of justice, to all penitents ; or, in the language of inspiration, that God might

be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. The Redeemer of man died and suffered what was necessary to be done and suffered, in order that repentance and remission of sins might be consistently preached to all nations, and offered to all sinners. He left no part of the work, which was assigned him, undone. He completely performed the will of the Father. He did not fail in one single point. Accordingly, he says, in his tender and pathetic address to the Father; *I have glorified thee on earth : I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.* And when we go forward, and view the astonishing scene of his crucifixion, which caused the sun in the firmament to hide his face, and all nature to utter a groan, we find that he did not expire, till he could say, **IT IS FINISHED.** The will of God was **FINISHED**; the salvation of man was **FINISHED**; the jewish dispensation of rites and forms was **FINISHED.** All was **FINISHED** that was in the eternal counsels of the parent of men and angels to be done, in regard to the way of life for lost men, dead in trespasses and sins. All was finished which the Saviour had undertaken to perform.

How full is the scripture of this idea, that Jesus Christ has made an atonement for human guilt? The few following passages will be particularly cited, out of many more that might be adduced with equal propriety. *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship*

one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. It has a purifying and cleansing power. It washes away the deepest stain of guilt; *cleanseth us from all sin.* Again, *he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* His propitiation is infinitely full. It has a sufficiency of merit for the pardon of all sin, and bears the same aspect on the sins of all, without any exception. We may not limit the merits of the precious blood of the Son of God. *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever.* We are told, that he *tasted death for every man*; that is, he has, by his sufferings and death, procured pardon and peace for every one without exception, who will comply with the terms upon which pardon and peace are offered. These terms are faith and repentance. The gospel points out a way for all, and offers mercy to all who will accept. No one is excluded. An honorable door of salvation is opened to all. And none who are disposed to enter, will be excluded. *We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.* In these words we find no limitation or exception. The gates of the celestial paradise will be barred against none, on account of a deficiency of merit in him, who stained the cross on mount Calvary with his blood, to pro-

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cure salvation for lost man. There is no want of readiness on the part of Deity, or of merit on the part of the Redeemer. Man alone, if he perish, must to all eternity bear the blame of his own destruction. God has an ear to hear, and an arm to save. Jesus Christ has an infinite fulness of merit. The true reason why sinners miss of salvation is assigned in these words: *Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.*

The apostle to the Hebrews declares, that as the blood of the jewish sacrifices availed to purify the flesh, so the blood of Christ avails to expiate sin, or to purify the conscience. *For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot unto God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*

5. And lastly, Jesus Christ is the way of true happiness, in opposition to all the false schemes of happiness, which mankind have struck out for themselves. The first and strongest desire of nature is after happiness. All sigh after, all wish for, all pursue the dear object. The high and low ranks of life equally seek it, though in different ways. The young and old are ardent in their enquiries after it. The learned and unlearned are restlessly engaged in the search.

But it is a reflection that forces itself upon the contemplative mind, when surveying the human race in general, looking back on the past ages of the world, and among the various nations that people the globe, that the most have been unsuccessful in their endeavours after the attainment of the wished-for object. They have erred wide from the mark. Wisdom here failed. The highest philosophy of the wisest heathen was here confounded, and had innumerable false notions of happiness, but none the true. It would be no small labor even to enumerate their widely differing and contradictory notions of the CHIEF GOOD. And it would give us pain, as it would be a full proof of the weakness of human reason, and folly of human pursuits. The world by wisdom knew not God. *Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. He is then the only way of true happiness, of spiritual wisdom. It is nowhere else to be found. But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth*

saith, It is not in me: And the sea saith, It is not in me. It cannot be gotten for gold; neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx or sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it; and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral or of pearls: For the price of wisdom is above rubies. The Topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it; neither shall it be valued with pure gold. Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air? Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears. God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof. The way of true wisdom or happiness is in Christ. Of God he is made unto us wisdom, as well as righteousness, sanctification and redemption. In him is our happiness; happiness here and hereafter,—in both worlds. As from him we have help, strength, righteousness, forgiveness and peace; so in him is true happiness. In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and all the essential ingredients of felicity. The beauty of holiness is its tendency to happiness; and no religion can be of any service to man, or be genuine, or can claim a celestial origin, but what lays a certain foundation for blessedness, but what tends to make its votaries inherently good, and to lead them to the possession of a substantial good, a permanent bliss. Mankind in general, and especially half-think-

ing and conceited philosophers, are prone to place all religion in external rituals, in something which is wholly foreign to its nature. Its very genius is to make us virtuous and happy, to bless man on earth, and exalt him to glory after death. Well may we say then to Christ, as the disciple did in the days of his flesh, *Lord, to whom should we go? for thou hast the words of eternal life.* No thing, no person under the sun, no nor the collection of all together, can give any solid, satisfactory happiness to any child of man. The world itself, the gay, giddy, thoughtless world allow this unawares, while they acknowledge, nay vehemently maintain, no man upon earth is contented. Discontent fills all the stations of life from the highest to the lowest. Where is the man who is contented with his lot? And if no man on earth be contented, it is certain no man is happy. For whatever station we fill, discontent is incompatible with happiness. Not only the giddy, but the thinking part of the world allow, that no man is contented. The melancholy proof of which we see on every side, in high and low, rich and poor. And generally the more any know, or higher their minds and manners are polished, the greater will be their discontent. "They know with more distinction to complain, and have superior sense in feeling pain." It is true, indeed, every one has some fancied scheme of bliss, which pleases for an hour or day; in which he hopes to be happy; but though

Hope blooms eternal in the human breast,
Man never *is*, but always to *be* blest-- He
is walking in a vain show, which will soon van-
ish away. So that universal experience, both of
our own and that of all our acquaintance and
friends, clearly proves that, as God made our
hearts for himself, so they cannot rest till they
rest in him; that till we acquaint ourselves with
him, we cannot be at peace. As a scorner of
the wisdom of God seeketh wisdom and findeth
it not, so a scorner of happiness in God seek-
eth happiness, but findeth it not. All on earth
is empty and fading. Nought below the sun can
open to us the treasures of real and durable
bliss. In Jesus Christ alone is real blessedness
to be found. He is the way of happiness for
a ruined world.

S E R M O N LXXVI.

The preceding subject continued

John, xiv. 6.

JESUS saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: No man cometh unto the FATHER but by me.

IN discoursing upon these words, what was proposed, in dependance on divine help, was to shew how Jesus Christ is the way, and the truth and the life. And then point out the impossibility of obtaining acceptance with God but by him. We have already attempted to shew in what respects he is THE WAY. *I am,* says he, THE WAY.

II. We proceed to consider in what respects he is THE TRUTH, and THE LIFE, the other two points included under the first division of the subject.

He is the *truth*, in opposition to the types and shadows of the jewish dispensation; in opposition to all false doctrines and religions; and as he revealed the only true system of faith and practice.

I. He is THE TRUTH, in opposition to the

types and shadows of the jewish dispensation. That dispensation, in its very structure, was wholly typical. Upon the very face of it was written, in characters legible to every discerning eye, imperfection. Its frame was only temporary, not designed either for a perpetual duration, or an universal extension. It was, indeed, wisely contrived by its Author, the true God, who never does any thing in vain, to effect the purposes he had in view, to prepare the way for, and to introduce in due season, a more complete and full manifestation of his infinite love and rich grace. One peculiar nation was to be called out, and distinguished from all the rest of the world. They were hedged and fenced in by a system of laws and ordinances, both civil and sacred, which would always keep them a distinct people from the rest of mankind; and by them was the knowledge of the true God and his worship to be communicated to other nations, at different times. Abraham the son of Terah, who lived at Ur, a city in Chaldea, was the person upon whom the divine wisdom fixed to be the head and founder of this favourite nation. Accordingly, in the seventy fifth year of his age, and in the year of the world two thousand-twenty and two, God appeared to him, and commanded him to leave his country, and his kindred, and his father's house, and prepare to go into the land which God should show him; at the same time promising to make him a great nation, to bless him, and to make his name great; and more-

over, that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed, that is, from him the Messiah should descend. After the lapse of many years, at the time appointed in the decrees of the supreme Being, Moses is raised up to be the leader of the oppressed Israelites from Egyptian bondage, and made the instrument of revealing to them the system of their laws and ordinances, civil and sacred. Hence the Jewish dispensation is frequently called the Mosaic æconomy. This was well fitted to accomplish all its own purposes. All its system looked forward to the Messiah. He is the substance of the antient types and shadows of the legal dispensation. All the offerings, sacrifices, purifications, washings and other ceremonies under the law, were only to prepare the way for our Saviour to come in the flesh; to introduce the Christian dispensation; and to prefigure the gospel. Christ is the substance, they were the shadow. He is the truth, they were only types. *For the law having only a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never, with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sin. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sin every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. Therefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not; but a body hast thou prepared me,*

In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offerings and burnt offerings for sin thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein, which are offered by the law. Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God; he taketh away the FIRST that he may establish the SECOND. Thus it appears that the legal was wholly superseded by the Christian dispensation; and that Jesus Christ is the truth, in opposition to, and distinction from, all the types and shadows of the Mosaic system.

2 He is the truth, in opposition to all false doctrines and religions. He styles himself the true and faithful witness. The law was by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. And unto the angel of the church of Laodicea, write these things, saith the Amen, the true and faithful witness, the beginning of the creation of God. He was the faithful witness for God, and to man. John his harbinger testified of him, under the metaphor of the *true light*. That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. The true light in the moral world, in distinction from all false lights and impostors, which have, in various ages and countries, risen up and deceived many, to the disgrace of human nature and reproach of religion.

He is the truth, in opposition to all error,

delusion, false religions, and false modes of worship and idolatries among mankind. All idols and idolatries are called in scripture VANITY and a LIE. But Jesus of Nazareth is the truth.

Error and imposture, in all ages, have overspread the world, and obstructed human liberty and human happiness, as dark and gloomy clouds, overcasting the sky, shut out the pleasant and cheering beams of the natural sun, the parent of the light and palace of day. How many false religions have there been? and how much superstition blended with truth! painful sight to the eye of benevolence, and the loathing of rational philosophy! What daring impostors, in one age and another, have arisen to lead away the unwary and ignorant, and to establish themselves in power and riches! Nay, how many in the Christian world have pretended to extraordinary light and communications with the invisible world, to visions and impulses; and say, lo! here; and lo, there is truth! In distinction, therefore, from all error and imposture, false modes of worship, idolatry and superstition, is our Saviour *the truth*.

And as he was the true witness of the Father, so he always declared his mind and will plainly and clearly, without disguise or fraudulent designs. He always spoke the truth. He always acted according to the truth. He never, in his sermons and instructions, counsels, warnings and doctrines, departed from the truth.--And further,

3. He is the truth, as he revealed the only true system of faith and practice. He received his commission from the God of truth, and ever conducted agreeable to its tenor, without going beyond or falling short of it. To have exceeded it, would have been presumption. To have left any part of it unfinished, would have betrayed unfaithfulness. It was his meat and drink to do his Father's will, to which he was all attention and obedience. The doctrines which he taught were precisely what God would have revealed. The ordinances which he instituted were exactly what he was ordered to establish. The modes of worship which he enjoined were, not only such as reason approves, but such as he was authorised to appoint. He came not to do his own will, but the will of HIM that sent him. Accordingly, he that receiveth him, receiveth the Father that sent him. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father. Every departure, consequently, either from his doctrines or ordinances, or way of worship, is a departure from God. His design in coming into the world, among other important objects, was to be a light to it; to teach the way of life in truth :--to call mankind off from all idols and idol-worship; and to bring them back to truth and duty, from which they had widely strayed; to restore the worship of the one only living and true God. Long had the world been buried in idolatry and ignorance, in darkness and superstition. They were lost in a labyrinth of error. They were wandering in a wilderness of delusion and false religions.

He came therefore as a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of the people of Israel; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us; to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death; to guide our feet into the way of peace. He came to proclaim peace on earth, good will to men, and glory to God in the highest; to reveal the whole counsel of heaven, the mind and will of the Deity; to tell us what to believe and how to live. His religion may be thus concisely characterised, the science of truth and duty; the art of living virtuously in time, and happy in eternity. He is the only infallible guide. Under his teachings we need not fear delusion. In his school is the sublimest philosophy; in his life is seen the sweetest philanthropy; from his gospel arises the purest joy. No other guide is perfectly safe, because liable to err; if liable to err, of course liable to bewilder and mislead us. No man or body of men, however pious and learned, can be an infallible guide to souls beclouded with darkness, and straying in the paths of folly and error. Alas! poor blinded man, corrupted by passions, seduced by interest, loving to wander! In a Redeemer mayest thou, O wretched man, implicitly confide. Look to him, there, in that blessed teacher come from God, is no error; no false doctrine; no useless ceremonies. With him thou needest not fear imposition. He is the

only safe and infallible guide to felicity. He has unequivocally told thee, what to believe and how to live, and revealed the only true system of faith and practice.

There remains but one particular more to be elucidated, under this head of discourse, and that is, to enquire in what respect Jesus Christ is the *Life*. We have seen how he is the way, and the truth. We are now to enquire how he is the life. *Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.*

And he may, in a remote though proper sense, be denominated the life, as he has life in himself, and imparts to all the living. As God, clothed with all the divine attributes, he has life in and of himself. *For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.* He inhabits eternity; is the King of kings and Lord of lords; dwelleth in light unapproachable and full of glory. As he is God, we received from him our natural life, rational existence, with all its variety of rich blessings. In him we live and move. He gives to all life, and breath, and being, and all things. His omnipotent arm stretched out the heavens over our heads, as a curtain; established the earth; fixed the sun in the firmament; bid the moon to shine; and spread around, in gay profusion, the beauties of nature. Is not this an orthodox creed? Is it placing our Redeemer on an eminence too lofty and

magnificent? What saith the scripture, the only rule of faith and practice with rational Christians! Thus we read; *In the beginning was the word, & the word was with God, & the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.*

He has life therefore in himself originally and independently; and gives to all life and breath, and being, and all things, and of course may fitly be called life.

In a still higher and more exalted sense is he the life, as he purchased by his atoning blood, and bestows by his purifying grace, spiritual life. The natural life which we enjoy is derived from him as God; and the life of grace which believers have is immediately from his Spirit. For the Spirit of Christ dwells in all believers. He is then the believer's life in a direct and glorious sense. He lives in them by his grace and Spirit; not only procures for them the blessing of a rational existence, but the far superior blessing of spiritual life. *I am crucified with Christ*, may every believer say, after the example of the apostle, and in the same sense precisely; *nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* Jesus Christ is therefore most eminently the believer's life. He is the fountain of it; It flows

from him: It is maintained by him, as the branches are maintained by the nutritive juice of the vine; For, according to his own beautiful simile, he is the vine, and believers the branches. It is increased by him: For wherever a good work of grace is begun, it will not be left, but be carried on from one degree to another, till it reach perfection. And when death arrives in all its awful glooms and solemn shades, it will be consummated by him in life eternal. *If ye then be risen with Christ* (this is the very reasoning of St. Paul) *seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.* He, in brief, is the believer's life in regeneration, in justification, in progressive sanctification, and in glorification. By his dying merits he bought life for believers. By his living example he marked out the path of life. By his righteousness he intitles them to everlasting life. By his Spirit he nourishes up the life of faith. And, as the final Judge, he will say unto them, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Further,

He may be denominated with great propriety the LIFE, as after the wastes and glooms of death he will raise all to life again. It is appointed for all men once to die. The debt

of nature must be paid. The decree is past, the dreadful sentence hath gone forth, *Dust we are, and unto dust we must return*: And Oh, how often is it fulfilled before our eyes! Man, poor frail man, goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets. Around us we every where behold a busy multitude: Restless and uneasy in their present situation, they are incessantly employed in accomplishing a change of it; and, as soon as their wish is fulfilled, we discern by their behaviour that they are as dissatisfied as they were before. When they expected to have found a paradise, they find a desert. And after all the vain show of life has passed, death closes the awful scene. There is not only no distinction in, but no exemption from, the grave. There mingle persons of every age and character, of every rank and condition in life, the young and the old, the poor and the rich, the gay and the grave, the renowned and the ignorant. The smiling infant, the blooming youth, and the hoary head must all do homage to the king of terrors. Our friends who have gone before us to the solitary mansions of the dead, walked about in their day as we do now on the earth, enjoyed their friends, beheld the light of the sun, and were forming designs of future days.--But now to them all is finally closed. To them no more shall the seasons return, or the sun arise. No more shall they hear the voice of mirth, or behold the face of man. They are swept from the world, as though they had never been.

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They are carried away with a flood ; the wind has passed over them, and they are gone. What desolations has death made of the human race ! How are all past generations gathered into one lonely abode ! Must not our hearts be deeply affected with this awful lot of man ! But when we open the inspired volume, another world discloses itself to view ; our faith finds a resurrection there ; we are taught that this is not our final state ; and that at the end of the world, when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, man shall come forth from the chambers of putrefaction and dust. The whole human race, both the righteous and the wicked, shall, the second time, have life from the Son of Man. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God ; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Behold he cometh with clouds ; and every eye shall see him, and they also which peirced him ; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. The bending heavens and burning world will proclaim his advent. And his almighty voice shall sound through all the regions of the dead, and the countless millions of the human race shall start into life, but for purposes infinitely diverse. Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation. The sea shall give up the

dead which are in it: And death and hell shall deliver up the dead which are in them. Again, *Jefus faith unto her, I am the refurrection and the life.* That all mankind shall have a refurrection from the dead is moft evident from the following paffages of infpired truth: *But now is Chrift rifen, and become the firft-fruits of them that fleep.* For fince by man came death, by man alfo came the refurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even fo in Chrift fhall all be made alive. And futher on; So it is written, *The firft man Adam was made a living foul, the laft Adam was made a quickening fpirit.* Howbeit that was not firft which is fpiritual, but that which is natural, and afterwards that which is fpiritual. The firft man is of the earth, earthy; the fecond man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, fuch are they alfo that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, fuch are they alfo that are heavenly. Now this I fay, brethren, that flefh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I fhew you a myftery: we fhall not all fleep, but we fhall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the laft trump, (for the trumpet fhall found) and the dead fhall be raifed incorruptible, and we fhall be changed. For this corruptible muft put on incorruption, and this mortal muft put on immortality. So when this corruption fhall have put on incorruption, and this mortal fhall have put on immortality, then fhall be brought to paff the faying that is written, *Death is fwallowed up in victory.* O death, where is thy ftिंग! O grave, where is thy victory! Becauſe our Saviour will raife all

the human race from the dead, he is said to be the plague of death and destruction of the grave. The calling up the body from its ruins in death is an article no where to be found in nature's creed. The most enlightened in the pagan world did not even think of or hope for it. When the body was deposited in the dust, they bid a final and eternal farewell to it. The Christian religion alone enables us to look through the wastes and glooms of death, with the pleasing hopes of a resurrection of the body; and it will be raised in such a manner too, as to be not only a fit and commodious, but splendid mansion for the residence of the immortal soul. *So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory: It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.*

Again, Jesus Christ may fitly be called *the life*, as he gave his life a ransom for all. He laid down his life for the children of men. He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He condescended to take upon him our nature, to live in obscurity, to undergo poverty, shame and reproach, and to expire in agonies for us. Man had sinned, had forfeited life and the favour of God, became exposed to death temporal and eternal: And no way could he be restored to the lost image and forfeited favour of God, be rescued from the ruins of the grave, and raised to life eternal, but by the Son of God undergoing for him the pains of

death. No arm short of the divine could afford relief. And such was his grace, such his benevolence, such his pity for sinning, guilty, dying men, that Jesus Christ condescended to lay down his own life to save him. *He gave himself a ransom for all. I am, says he, the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.* He died that we might live. He left his throne of glory and tabernacled in clay, exchanged the hosannahs of angels for the reproaches of sinners, a crown of glory for a crown of thorns, and the form of God for that of a servant, in order to redeem fallen sinners. *Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow; of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* He became poor that we might be rich; rich in Christian graces here, and heavenly glories hereafter. *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*

Lastly, Jesus Christ is *the life*, as he will be-

flow, at the conclusion of the present scene of things, eternal life on all his disciples. This is life eternal, to know God and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even life eternal. He is called the true God, and life eternal. *This is the true God and life eternal.* When his friends and followers shall leave this world; when the places that now know them shall know them no more; when they shall come to walk through the valley of the shadow of death; when their probation-state shall be terminated, and time and the things of time be no more as to them, then he will receive them to the joys and glories of his kingdom, that they may be where he is, and behold his glory,--will admit them to participate of all the sublime felicities of eternal life. But the righteous shall go into life eternal. After pronouncing the blessed sentence of approbation, as the final and universal Judge, he will reign in life forever and ever with them, in that world where all tears shall be wiped away; where sorrow and sighing shall never enter; where all the soul shall feel, shall be perfect bliss; where all it shall express, shall be perfect praise; where love divine shall fill every heart, and hosannas exalted employ every tongue through the ceaseless revolution of eternal ages.

II. The other branch of the subject was to point out the impossibility of obtaining acceptance with God, but by Christ. *No man cometh*

unto the Father, but by me. As we have dwelt so long on the first division of our subject, to avoid repetition a few words only need be said on this.

Jesus Christ then is the only way to the Father, to pardon, to peace, and to glory. He came to seek and save that which was lost. Man lost to God, in one sense, and lost to happiness, wanted a way opened for his return to God; restoration to his image, and re-instatement in his favour; to be renewed and justified; to be reconciled to God, and to have God reconciled to him; and to have a friendly intercourse commenced. This is done by the Saviour. And mankind can truly know, acceptably worship, and rightly serve the supreme Being, or finally see his face, and enjoy his presence, only by him. A mediatory salvation, a propitiatory sacrifice, an atonement for sin is of absolute necessity. The divine nature must be placated, the divine law honored, divine justice satisfied, and divine holiness displayed. We cannot come to the Father, but by the Son. He must be our mediator to introduce us to the throne of grace, and his Father's favorable regards. He must mediate and plead for us, be our advocate and patron, hope and dependance. *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son hath not life. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father. Neither is there*

salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, even Jesus Christ.

This is a doctrine of the highest possible moment in itself, and especially seasonable in the present day, when so many are casting off strict and pure religion, are recurring back to NATURE'S LIGHT, boasting that it alone is adequate, denying the Lord that bought them, and deluding and flattering themselves with the idea, that there is no need of a Saviour to expiate sin, and open the way to heaven and its felicity. Whatever high notions of the dignity of man and of human merit any may be disposed to entertain, to whatever vain refuges men may resort, whatever contempt they may affect to cast on the gospel and a mediatory interposition, it is an eternal truth, that no religion can be acceptable to the Deity, which doth not embrace the atonement of his Son. *No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.* He is the only ark of safety. He is the only foundation of hope laid in Zion, upon which we may rest our eternal all. He is the sole dependance of lost man. Out of him there is no help, no hope, no remedy for the guilty. Pardon, salvation, peace and acceptance with the supreme Being out of him it is impossible to obtain. He is the way, the truth, and the life: *No man cometh unto the Father, but by him.* He is the help of the helpless, the hope of the

hopeless, the health of the sick, the strength of the weak, the riches of the poor, the peace of the disquieted, the comfort of the afflicted, the light of those that sit in darkness, the companion of the disconsolate, the friend of the friendless, the way of the bewildered, the wisdom of the ignorant, the righteousness of the guilty, the sanctification of the unholy, the redemption of the wretched, and, to say all in a word, the salvation of the lost.

In the review of this pleasing subject, can we refuse to admire the riches of a Saviour's condescension and grace? We know not how to think or speak worthily upon so delightful and beautiful a subject. Could we speak with the tongue of men and angels, in strains of celestial eloquence, the half of its praises would be still unspoken. All is stupendous humiliation, from his Father's throne to the accursed tree. All is astonishing exaltation, from the sorrow of death, and the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, to the joys of heaven, and the right hand of the Majesty on high. All his immense progress of condescension and love was for us. "His mysterious incarnation unites and endears us to God; his natural birth procures our regeneration; his unspotted life restores us to a blissful immortality; his bitter agonies give us calm repose; his bloody sweat washes away our manifold pollutions; his deep wound distils the balsom which heals our disorders; his perfect obedience is our first title to end

“less felicity; his full atonement purchases our
 “free justification; his cruel death is the spring
 “of immortal life; his grave the gate of hea-
 “ven; his resurrection the pledge of glory;
 “his ascension the triumph of our souls; his sit-
 “ting at the right hand of the Majesty on high
 “the earnest of our future coronation and exalt-
 “ed felicity; and his prevailing intercession
 “the inexhaustible fountain of all our blessings.”
 What grace! what benevolence! what mer-
 cy infinite, incomprehensible, unparallelled in
 all the records of eternity, are displayed in the
 redemption of a ruined world by a Saviour?
 Well might he say of himself, *I am the way,*
and the truth, and the life: No man cometh unto
the Father, but by me.

The whole discourse will be closed by a short
 exhortation to all that hear me; to repair to
 the Son of God for help and hope. Children
 of men, hear the voice of mercy and redeem-
 ing love. This day you have had set before
 you Christ Jesus the Lord as the way, the truth,
 and the life. No doctrine can be more impor-
 tant; no subject can be more interesting.
 Hear then the glad tidings of salvation and
 pardon. Behold him who is the way of life;
 the only path to eternal felicity; the wonder
 of angels; the joy of all heaven; the refuge
 of poor, perishing mortals. O! fly to this
 Saviour. Hear his sweet voice. Receive his of-
 fered grace. Be convinced of your need of
 help, and resort to him for pardon and peace,

as your teaching prophet, atoning priest and ruling king, the almighty friend of man. Then will your lives, in your respective places and stations, be useful; your death, when it shall come, peaceful; your account at the enlightened tribunal joyful; and your eternity blessed.



S E R M O N LXXVII.

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY in CONFERRING
MEANS and GRACE.

BY

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Rom. ix. 21.

*Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the
same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another
unto dishonor?*

ST. Paul had plainly asserted, and largely
proved, in this epistle, that justification and
salvation were only to be obtained by faith in
Christ, and not by the law. In the beginning
of this chapter he expresseth his great and ten-
der concern for the jewish nation, who so gen-
erally rejected Christ. *I say the truth in Christ,
I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in
the holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and con-
tinual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that my-
self were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my
kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israel-*

ites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.

Here it is observable, that among many great favors conferred upon that people, he mentions the *promises*. The promises were made to Abraham and his seed, called afterwards the *Israel* of God. The great fundamental promise was, *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee.*

St Paul, as he intended and did largely treat of the rejection of the Jews, and calling of the Gentiles to be the people of God, gives a distinct answer to sundry objections that might be made to the divine conduct and faithfulness in this matter.

First, With respect to the promises, and particularly the great one before mentioned, *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee.* It might be objected, This promise was not fulfilled, for great numbers of them had perished; and if the Jews were to be rejected, many more would perish.

To this the apostle says, they were not to conceive the word of God had taken no effect, or that God was unfaithful. *For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel; neither because they are of the seed of Abraham, are they all children.*

Thus he teacheth, what is also plainly asserted in other parts of holy writ, viz. That *they* are of the seed of Abraham, in the most important sense, who are made partakers of Abraham's faith, and that these, and these only, are intituled to the saving, spiritual blessings promised to Abraham and to his seed: To these God has promised to be *their God* in the highest sense. This blessing God hath not promised to all the natural offspring of Abraham; but that he would give them the land of Canaan, the divine oracles and institutions, and own them as sustaining a covenant relation to him, so long as they walked in his ways, and observed his commandments to do them.

That God's promise doth take effect St. Paul proves, not only by saying, *They are not all Israel that are of Israel*; but asserts, *In Isaac shall thy seed be called*.

He farther illustrates the matter by introducing the affair of Rebecca, who had conceived by Isaac. *For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger; as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*

Thus the apostle reconciles the difficulty that ariseth from a consideration of the rejection of the unbelieving Jews, and the word of promise.

I. By explaining the true meaning of the promise; viz: That it was not made, in the highest spiritual sense, to all the natural seed; but only to those who should be the seed of Abraham by faith.

II. By asserting and proving the absolute sovereignty of God, in disposing of the children of men; and at the same time, answers a cavil against the doctrine expressed in the 14th verse and on: *What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth; but of God that sheweth mercy.*

This he illustrates also by the instance of Pharaoh. *For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee,, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.* God had determined to withhold his grace from Pharaoh, and to allow, or permit him to take the course to which his proud, stubborn heart prompted him.

All the children of men are plunged alike into a state of sin and misery, equally under guilt by the apostacy, and exposed to wrath. God in a sovereign way picks out some of the fallen, apostatized race, and makes them

vessels of grace and glory. The apostle's argument is, there is no unrighteousness in God's proceeding thus. Then in the 19th. verse he introduceth another objector. *Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? Who hath resisted his will?* To which he answers, *Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another to dishonor?* Thus the apostle asserts God's right, as the sovereign owner and ruler of the world, to bestow special favors on some, which he withholds from others of the same description.

In discoursing from these words, I propose to show,

I. That all mankind, Jews and Gentiles, are in a state of sin and guilt, exposed to wrath; and so are justly as absolutely at the disposal of God, both with respect to his giving them *external means*, and bestowing on them *special grace*, as the clay is at the disposal of the potter.

II. Shall briefly consider the principal means which God, here represented by the potter, useth, in forming some to be vessels unto honor.

III. Conclude with some improvement.

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I. That all mankind, Jews and Gentiles, are in a state of sin and guilt, exposed to wrath, and so are justly as absolutely at the disposal of God, both with respect to his giving them external means, and bestowing on them *special* grace, as the clay is at the disposal of the potter, will appear from the following considerations.

1. That God made Adam in his own image, a free voluntary agent, capable of standing, but liable to fall; and that he was placed as the public head or representative of his posterity: That God gave him a law, as a rule of his obedience, annexing death *to him, and his posterity*, as the penalty. That we take great care, and have our ideas of *this* matter regulated by the holy scriptures, and so be prepared to consent to the truth of it; and acknowledge humbly, that in Adam we sinned and died, is of great importance. That we be able also to see and acknowledge that Adam was to blame for his sin, and that there is justice and propriety in imputing it to us. That it is a just and glorious thing in God to determine, that the posterity of Adam should, because of their connection with him, come into the world devoid of the holy moral image of God; and, instead thereof, have such an indwelling, permanent, powerful propensity to sin, as will certainly lead them to eternal ruin, unless it be counteracted by means and divine grace.

These are indeed some of the leading truths

of divine revelation. And we acknowledge there are some difficulties involved in the assertion, that God hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, and yet that Adam was in such a sense a free agent as constituted him a proper subject of praise and blame. Adam, having received his existence from another, communicates the idea of his being very inferior to his Creator, who is absolutely perfect and unchangeable. God saw proper, in his infinite wisdom, to place in the scale of being such a creature as man, endowed, as he was, with certain degrees of what may be called natural and moral excellency or ability. An independent, self-sufficient, almighty creature cannot exist. Great degrees of dependency on God, the Creator and Preserver of all things, are inseparable from creatures, both with respect to the existence and exercise of every kind of power.

Some have asserted, that there is in the human will a self-determining power, or that the human will is *free*, and that this was necessary to constitute man a moral agent, or render him a proper subject of blame or praise. Others deny this, in the sense in which it is asserted, and affirm it improper to say at all, the human *will* is free; but that *man* is free to do what he wills; or is a voluntary free agent, at liberty to act or not act, according to the dictates of his will. It is also asserted, that human volitions are to be ranked among *effects*, which are produced by causes foreign to them, and so conclude, that

the will is determined by some extrinsic cause, that is, by something without, or distinct from, itself. Thus, in the chain of causes that produce effects, they run up to the first cause of all things, which is God; and exculpate the ever-blessed and holy God from blame, in introducing, by a necessary connection of causes and events, the first sinful human volition, by saying, that the sinfulness of it, and of every one else, lies, not in its cause, but in its nature. Therefore, though the volitions and actions of a moral agent are necessary, with that kind of necessity which exists between moral causes and effects, yet they may be blameable and praise-worthy.

This affair may also be represented by saying, that God placed Adam as the public head and representative of his posterity, with such abilities as it pleased God to give him, constantly however dependent upon his Maker, in every possible view; and that it pleased God, in his infinite wisdom, to withhold from him that divine influence which was necessary to his continuance in his holy state, and that immediately being left, he fell.

Others say, that God made man in his own image, capable to stand and liable to fall; that God permitted his fall, and overruled it in a wise and powerful manner, so that he has brought great good out of great evil.

The Christian world are very sensible that the introduction of sin is a matter of great mystery, and that clouds and darkness hang over it. I shall at present say nothing more concerning it :--Nor shall I attempt to illustrate the wisdom, justice and goodness of the divine constitution, which placed Adam as the foederal head of his posterity. Let it suffice to say *it was done* by the infinitely wise, holy, just and merciful God, the glorious head of the universe. *And shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* Let it suffice also to say, that Adam thus placed did sin; was truly and really to blame for his sin; and that his posterity sinned and died in him. So that it is a fact, an awful and lamentable truth, that we have been *shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin*;--are disposed, as soon as capable of moral exertions, to do evil, and averse from that which is holy and good.

The old testament, no doubt, teacheth, that Adam's posterity were included with him in the covenant God entered into with him, and the denunciation of the threatening, as appears from the curse upon the ground, which was to be inhabited by his posterity, and by the effects which soon took place in consequence of the fall. But the new testament, which explains much of the old, throws great light on this matter, and asserts, *that by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*

But to make the matter still more clear, and leave no room to suppose that none suffered the penalty of death, but those who were guilty of actual sin against a known law, the apostle adds, *For until the law, that is, before the giving the written law by Moses, sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed where there is no law:* And farther adds, *That death, which was the penalty, reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.* That is, death, the wages of sin, was suffered by infants, who had not, as Adam had, actually broken a known law. This one man, by whom sin entered, was Adam. For Paul says, I. Cor. 15. 22. *In Adam all die.*

II. It will appear that all mankind, Jews and Gentiles, are in a state of sin and guilt, and so are justly exposed to wrath, from a consideration of the universal wickedness of mankind, which I shall not now take time to describe.

III. From the holy oracles of God.--Of the old world it was said, *that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually.* In another place, *The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.* Very remarkable is that passage in Job. *What is man, that he should be clean? And he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints: yea, the heavens are not clean in*

his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water? The Psalmist says, Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Jeremiah declares, The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it? Our Lord says, Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murder &c. as out of their native fountain. The same truth is taught by our Saviour, when he affirms, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. And when the author of our text is proving that justification cannot be obtained by the deeds of the law, but by faith in Christ, he shows, that both Jews and Gentiles were under sin, though the latter had not the written law; That all had done wickedly;--there is none righteous, no not one; yea, there is none that doeth good, no not one.

Thus it appears, that all mankind, Jews and Gentiles, are in a state of sin and guilt. We have sinned in our representative, and all, who have obtained a capacity for personal, actual sin, have broken God's law. Now if the law is good, the penalty proper, and if all have broken it, then all are justly obnoxious to punishment, and nothing, but an act of grace, can prevent the execution of the sentence. The law declares the sinner shall die.

True, and a glorious truth it is, that Christ our Mediator has perfectly kept the divine law; died the death of the cross; has arisen

from the dead ; has ascended into heaven ; and is there clothed with authority, with full power, as the great executor of the divine purposes, to give eternal life to men.--But to whom ? To all men ? No. Christ teacheth us what to believe concerning this. Just before his suffering, he lift up his eyes to heaven, and said, *Father, the hour is come ; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.* Agreeably to this we are told in the Acts, That when Paul and Barnabas were rejected by the Jews, they turned to the Gentiles, and informed them, *That Christ was set to be a light of the Gentiles; that he should be for salvation to the ends of the earth: And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: And as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed.* Believers in Christ are frequently spoken of as those who were under the law, were dead in sin, and under the curse ; but they are washed with the washing of regeneration, they are renewed by the holy Ghost. Repentance is given to them, faith is given, according to the divine, eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ before the world began.

We do not know, nor can we know, who these vessels unto honor are, until they are called and sanctified, bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and so by an holy life and conversation cause their light to shine in the world.

This *effectual calling*, this *washing of regeneration*, and *renewing of the holy Ghost*, is not of him that *willeth*, nor of him that *runneth*; but of God that *sheweth mercy*. Agreeably to this, *John*, speaking of them who had power to become the sons of God, adds, *Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

Seeing then that all have sinned in Adam, that all, who have been capable of actual sin, have transgressed, and so are justly dead in law; and God is not bound by any promise to show mercy to all, and *none* deserve it; seeing also that God gives his written law and other means only to some nations; and by his Son gives spiritual and eternal life only to a *part* where his gospel is: Therefore we may conclude, that men are as absolutely at the disposal of the great Jehovah, both with respect to granting the *external* means, and the bestowment of *special*, sanctifying grace, as the clay is at the disposal of the potter, who can, and does, with great propriety, take parts of the same large lump, and make *vessels* to different uses.

We now proceed to the *second* head, which is briefly to mention some of the *principal means*, which God, here represented by the potter, useth in forming some to be *vessels unto honor*.

Jesus Christ hath been from eternity designed of God a Mediator between God and man. By him God made the world. By him sinners

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of Adam's race are enlightened, redeemed, sanctified, and saved from wrath. Christ has graciously interfered in the characters of prophet, priest and king. As a PROPHEt, he has given men much instruction. In ancient times, before his incarnation, he appeared as the angel of the covenant, and gave salutary and necessary instructions. By the influence of the holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of Christ, we have the holy scripture, that infallibly written guide, which giveth true information respecting our apostacy, and the method of recovery. In due time Christ assumed the body God prepared; came into the world, a light to lighten the nations; and invited those that labored, and were heavy laden, to come unto him that they might find *rest* to their souls. As a PRIEST, he, once for all, made a sufficient, a full and satisfactory sacrifice of himself to God for the sins of those whom God had given him, and is ascended into heaven, there to make continual intercession for those who are disposed and enabled to come unto God by him. As a KING, he is, according to antient promise, exalted upon God's holy hill of Zion;--thrones, dominions and principalities are made subject to him. All power in heaven and on earth is given into his hand, that he may give eternal life to as many as the Father has given him. We are also told that he has the keys of hell and of death. So that he is ruling in heaven, earth and hell; in the hearts of his people, and over all

his and their enemies. As the great head of his church, Christ hath instituted ordinances to be observed by it; baptism as the door of admission; the Lord's supper for commemoration, instruction, growth in knowledge and grace; which ordinances are God's covenants of promise; * in which he promiseth still to be a God to his people, and calls upon them to accept of offered mercy.

Father, before Christ's ascension, he, assuring his apostles of his authority for the purpose, said, *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.* They went according to those directions; they taught, baptized, planted churches, watered them, governed them, and ordained others also to teach, to preach, to administer ordinances and govern, in conjunction with such other rulers as the new testament calls *governments*, or *governors*, who did not labor in the word and doctrine.

Here it is worthy of observation, the apostles carefully give the character of a gospel-bishop, and direct those they had ordained to lay hands suddenly on no man. Even *the deacons*

* Vide Doctor Guise on Eph: ii. 12, with his note. With him I agree in calling the ordinances of the gospel God's covenants of promise.

must first be proved. Thus we are taught, that those to whom the power of ordination is committed, must carefully examine as to the prerequisite qualifications for teaching, preaching and governing in the church of God.

I shall here also mention the divine providences, which are admirably calculated to reprove and instruct men. these By often are the ways of sinners hedged in, as with thorns, and they are not allowed to proceed in that prosperity with which the human heart is most pleased; and by them frequently are the people of God much benefited. *Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now I have learned to keep thy law.*

I shall conclude this head by observing, that the cooperations of the Spirit are essentially necessary, and therefore Christ promised, John 16 : 8 &c. that after his ascension he would send the Spirit, *to reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement; and he shall guide you into all truth, and he shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.* These are some of the principal means which God, here represented by a potter, useth in forming vessels unto honor.

I now proceed to an improvement of the subject.

Here I am naturally led, *first*, to address you, my dear and Revd brethren,* in the gospel of

*This sermon was first preached before a number of ministers

our Lord Jesus. What has been said offers to our minds the great importance of the office and work in which we are engaged. We are taught to consider mankind in a state of sin and guilt, exposed to the wrath of an almighty and holy God; that Christ is, by a variety of means, and by our instrumentality, forming vessels to honor out of the great corrupt mass. This is an alarming thought, viz: That all those who are not by the word, providences, gospel and Spirit of Christ, formed unto honor, are vessels unto dishonor. Nothing more is necessary to form men to an extreme of wickedness, than for God to withhold from them his grace. Thus, I suppose, God hardened Pharaoh's heart; thus God sends strong delusions to some, that they may believe a lie, and be damned. If we are to judge that none are coming to honor, but such as are, by the forming influence of means and divine efficacious grace, conformed unto the divine image, then how few vessels unto honor in our day? Secret things belong unto the Lord; his revealed will is the rule by which we are to deport ourselves in the gospel ministry. It is possible we may be glorious in the eyes of our Lord, though very unsuccessful. We know not whom, among those who have not given evidence of sanctification, he hath chosen or ordained to eternal life; but our business is, *knowing the terror of the Lord, to persuade men to be reconciled to God; to reprove, rebuke and exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.* As good stewards of the mysteries of God, we are

to endeavor rightly to divide the word of truth. We are to hold up to the view of our fellow men the strictness, the spirituality and unchangeableness of God's law, carefully to describe the depravity of the human heart, and the danger of the ways of sin. We are to search out all the lurking places of disguised hypocrites, and inform them, that nothing short of holiness of heart, true repentance, an humble dependence upon, and choice of Christ, the Lord our righteousness, will answer. No doubt it will be highly proper to dwell much upon the excellency, glory and all-sufficiency of Christ, and of the great atonement he has made. We will also do well frequently to recollect what Christ said to the primitive ministers of his religion, *Without me ye can do nothing. Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase.* Our time to act as instruments for Christ in this world is short, we are dying daily; therefore, to do whatsoever our hands find to do with our might, will surely be proper.

Secondly, Let all such as have scriptural reason to believe that divine grace hath been already, in some degree, communicated, be thankful; because you entertain hope that God is forming you into the divine likeness, and preparing you for eternal honor. Let such review the corrupt lump from which they were taken. What maketh any of you to differ from others more wicked in

practice? Is it not that you have had means, and the transforming, sanctifying grace of God? *By the grace of God, I am what I am*, said the apostle

3. I shall say a few words to those who are yet in their sins, unregenerate, and possibly more unlikely, by appearance, to be formed unto honor than formerly. You have heard in this discourse, that God made man in his own holy image, that Adam was placed as a public head, that in him we sinned and died; that all have sinned, and consequently that all be at the mercy, at the disposal of God. The blessed God shows by his conduct that he considers this the case. He has taken church privileges from the Jews, and given them to the Gentiles; he gives his grace to some, and withholds it from others. His reasons for this conduct are above us. It will most certainly be dangerous to rest satisfied in the belief of such principles, and continue disposed to make such objections to the doctrines held to view in this discourse, as are prevalent in the world.

The objection, *Why doth he yet find fault?* is still in the hearts and mouths of men. Why should he not find fault? Did not God make man upright? Has he not sought out many inventions? Was not Adam to blame for his sin? Were you not represented in Adam? Is not sin imputed to you? And have you not sinned in your own proper persons? And are

you not to blame? Most certainly. If you are, you ought to confess guilty, and throw yourselves upon the *mercy* of God.

But It may be queried, If God has given to Christ a certain number *only*, and the others are not chosen to life, and God does not intend to communicate his grace to them; then how are they to blame, and how can the sincerity of God be vindicated in making offers to the multitude? Here it must be remembered, that God is infinitely wise; that his ways and thoughts are far above ours; *that he calleth those things which be not, as though they were.* That instructions, invitations, remonstrances &c. &c. are designed as means, by the all-wise God, for forming his chosen ones to glory. The wicked are to blame for not loving God supremely; for their not loving his holy law; for their loving and chusing sin. Their rejection of Christ is to be considered, not as their first sin; but as the highest manifestation of the depravity and stubbornness, yea, the rebellion of the heart.

Let it be considered, that all the inability sinners are under is a *want of disposition*, not a natural inability, or a want of power to do that which they have a heart or disposition to perform. Men are able to love what pleaseth them, what is agreeable to them. Are we not to blame for our opposition to the great God and his laws? Are we not to blame, in

that we do not love and approve of that, which every just, holy and excellent being in the universe approves of? And in that we approve of what is abhorred by every wise, holy, just and excellent being?

With regard to the sincerity of God in making overtures to the multitude, let what has been said in the preceding part of the discourse be recollected; viz. That God made man upright, and he has, through his own default, lost a holy disposition; that all men are justly condemned by the law; and that the offers of mercy are free, undeserved grace. Let it be remembered also, that God hath thought proper to give those, whom he hath ordained to eternal life, their existence in different ages, in different countries and places; and, as the great and wise disposer of all things, he has fixed upon certain means, which he designs to render effectual for the eternal salvation of his chosen ones. It is to be observed too, that the prophets of old called upon a whole nation to which they were sent. Christ preached to promiscuous multitudes: The apostles were directed to teach all nations, and hold up the terms of salvation: Christ's ministers now are to imitate them. Where is the insincerity of this? Is there any injury offered to men, when they have proposals of mercy and pardon made to them, who stand in so much need of both? especially when the reason of non-acceptance is their own blameable opposition to

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God, his law and holiness, and their approbation or choice of sin. And let it be remembered too, and we must insist upon it, that there are no promises of regenerating grace and eternal salvation made to the doings of unregenerate men. The promises of salvation are only made to believers, so that God is not chargeable with any breach of promise made to them. Christ expressly says, *Many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able*; that is, in the way in which they seek.

Indeed, there are promises that God will pour out of his Spirit abundantly, and that he will wash with clean water, and give the new heart; *Yet for all this I will be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.* But who are the house of Israel, that shall thus wrestle with God in prayer and prevail? Not the unsanctified, the unbelieving and unholy, I suppose; but the true spiritual Israel of God; yea, all who are the children of Abraham, by being made partakers of his faith. These God stirreth up to search after him with all their hearts, when in mercy he intendeth to pour out of his promised Spirit, to convince and to sanctify; while others are indulging their natural propensities, and perhaps very thoughtless of God and of eternal things.

We will suppose now, a sinner finally and irretrievably lost, and enduring the wrath of God, and taking a retrospective view of his

past situation and circumstances, and of his present state. I conceive his remarks would be as follows: "I was once on earth for a short space; I was taught my days there would be few; I was directed to attend to my spiritual and eternal interest; I was informed that Adam represented me and all his posterity; that he broke the law under which he was placed; that his sin was imputed to me, so that I was guilty; that when I became capable of moral action, I was disposed to evil. I did live in the love and practice of sin against God, contrary to the dictates of my conscience. Christ did come into the world, did keep the law of God perfectly, died in the room of sinners of Adam's race; he arose, and had power to give repentance, pardon of sin, and eternal life. All this and much more of his ability and willingness to save I heard, and was very inattentive and unconcerned. My heart fought after the then present enjoyments: I did not love the terms on which salvation was offered: I could not brook that God should be a sovereign, and, in the situation I was, save or damn me as it pleased HIM. I never did feel a disposition from my heart to come down so low as to acknowledge that I really and justly merited hell; and therefore, in all my endeavors to seek favor, I secretly thought that God would be improperly severe, if I perished finally. I was told that secret things belonged to the Lord; and that his revealed will it was my duty to obey. I did not know but I might have obtain-

ed mercy; but I did not like the terms, nor did I, agreeably to them, earnestly and perseveringly seek". Rage, despair, and every improper temper, I suppose, would in such a mind prevail.

But to return; I think there are fully sufficient reasons why sinners of Adam's race should be eternally punished, even if Christ had never been promised. Surely then, though Christ hath thought proper to publish the terms of salvation to the promiscuous multitude, those to whom proposals or offers of pardon and mercy are made, are not injured or affronted, seeing they really are guilty, and need pardon: Especially if we add to all this, that God deals with men as reasonable creatures, and gives much information, many rebukes, counsels, warnings and remonstrances, and that, in the present state of things, the wicked are much benefited by Christ's kingdom, and the instructions, ordinances and government of it.

As to the representation frequently made of a prince binding a number of men with strong chains, in a prison, and then calling upon them to come out, offering rewards, &c. it is *unfair and unjust*. For all the chains, with which sinners are bound, are of their own making and putting on, and consist only in the disposition or choice of their own hearts. We are to blame primarily and principally for our love of sin, and aversion from God and his law. The

more we have of this, the more we are to blame. Therefore sinners are so often exhorted to turn from sin, and turn to God.

Another objection frequently made to this scheme of doctrine, is, *That Christ is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.* I. John ii. 2. To which I answer, the apostles of Christ were Jews. The Jews had been directed to keep themselves separate from the Gentiles. To the Jews the promise of the Messiah had been, in a particular manner directed, and they had no idea that the other nations were to be benefited by Christ, as abundantly appears in holy writ. When the apostles obtained conviction that the blessings of the gospel were communicated to other nations equally with themselves, they break out in astonishment, *Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life!* And *He is not only a propitiation for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world.* I. John, ii. 2. Every body knows that the universal terms *all the world, all men, &c.* can, in sundry places, only mean great numbers, and so are used in a restrictive sense.

What should we do then, the sinner will say? I answer: Use every possible mean to obtain just ideas of God, of his law, of yourselves, your sin, your guilt; of Christ and his righteousness, of heaven and of hell. Attend carefully; *By the law is the knowledge of sin. Faith cometh by hearing.* Listen then to the gospel. We have no idea that God ever regenerates a person, while utterly ignorant of all

cised, where there is no knowledge. Therefore the careful use of means is necessary, and is calculated to remove a barr out of the way of your salvation.

Attending then to these truths that respect your eternal salvation, come, bow before a holy and merciful God; confess the truth; lie in the dust, and cry with the anxiety which the nature of the case requires; Lord, for Christ's sake, be merciful to me a sinner justly condemned.

God, in the exercise of grace in a sovereign way, is giving the means to some, which he withholds from others, and conferring efficacious grace upon some, which he withholds from others of the same description. By means, and by grace conferred, vessels are formed unto honor. Let your prayer be, Lord, without thy grace I shall be a vessel unto dishonor.

Finally, let all remember, that as *none by searching can find out the Almighty unto perfection*, so we are very incompetent to know and judge of all the reasons of the divine conduct in many cases. To solve clearly all the difficulties that may be stated concerning the foreordinations of heaven, and the liberty of moral agents, is no easy task. Clearly to see into the reasons why God hath left some nations in great ignorance, while others enjoy great light and means, and why some are formed

vessels unto honor, and others left to be vessels unto dishonor, is not for us weak, short-sighted, imperfect mortals. Christ hath taught us modesty here. *I thank thee, O Father, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.* And the apostle says, *O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor?*

THE END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME.



